



Drunk elephant sent to detox

UTAHNAPEN (AP) — A drunk elephant was sent to a detox center after being found wandering alone in the streets of a town in Thailand. The elephant, which was found by a local resident, was taken to a veterinary clinic where it was treated for alcohol poisoning. The elephant was found in a state of severe intoxication and was unable to walk properly. It was found in the middle of a road, and the local resident took it to the clinic. The elephant was found in a state of severe intoxication and was unable to walk properly. It was found in the middle of a road, and the local resident took it to the clinic.

KLM puts down 440 squirrels

UTAHNAPEN (AP) — KLM has put down 440 squirrels after they caused a major problem for the airline. The squirrels were found in the cargo hold of a KLM plane, and they were causing a major problem for the airline. The squirrels were found in the cargo hold of a KLM plane, and they were causing a major problem for the airline.

Japanese pilots can still light up

UTAHNAPEN (AP) — Japanese pilots are still allowed to smoke during flights, despite the fact that it is illegal in many countries. The pilots are still allowed to smoke during flights, despite the fact that it is illegal in many countries.

Him returned 64 years later

UTAHNAPEN (AP) — A man who was thought to be dead for 64 years has been found alive. The man was found in a cave in the mountains of the Himalayas. He was found by a local resident, and he was taken to a hospital where he was treated. The man was found in a cave in the mountains of the Himalayas. He was found by a local resident, and he was taken to a hospital where he was treated.

300 trappers get their revenge

UTAHNAPEN (AP) — 300 trappers have been caught by the authorities. The trappers were caught in a trap set by the authorities. The trappers were caught in a trap set by the authorities.

Royal Decree adjourns Parliament session

AMMAN (J.T.) — A Royal Decree was issued on Wednesday adjourning the current ordinary session of Parliament as of Thursday, April 15. The 13th Parliament began its ordinary session on Nov. 28, 1998.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأي.

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AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, APRIL 15-16, 1999, DHUL HIJJA 29-30, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

King, Mubarak, UAE president discuss Mideast peace process, Iraq, Kosovo

By P.V. Vivekanand

ABU DHABI — A common Arab approach to the troubled Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq and the crisis in the Balkans topped the agenda of a mini-summit that the leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the UAE held in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

His Majesty King Abdullah, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, who hosted the trilateral meeting, also reviewed means of restoring Arab solidarity and reestablishing the concept of collective Arab action on issues of common concern, an official spokesman said.

King Abdullah and Her Majesty Queen Rania returned to Jordan later on Wednesday following the conclusion of the talks.

The mini-summit was arranged at short notice, according to officials. Mubarak was making a short stop-over in the UAE on his way back from a visit to the Far East, and King Abdullah was here on an official visit, his first after assuming power following the death of King Hussein.

The official spokesman said Sheikh Zayed "stressed his keenness that meetings and consultations should continue between Arab leaders to coordinate their stances regarding issues of concern to Arabs."

The three leaders discussed "the current situation in Arab countries, the efforts being exerted to confront the difficulties challenging the Arabs and stressed the importance of collective Arab action," according to the spokesman.

He added that the leaders also studied "the impact of the current changes in the international arena on Arab countries, particularly Iraq, the necessity of alleviating the hardships suffered by the Iraqi people and the crisis in Kosovo."

They reviewed the developments of the Middle East peace process "in light of the obstacles created by Israel and they emphasised their support for whatever decisions to be taken by the Palestinian National Authority for the benefit of the Palestinians to regain their legitimate rights," said the spokesman.

The meeting was attended by the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the armed forces, Sheikh Khalifah Ben Zayed Al Nahyan.

The official media of the UAE described the mini-summit as "a turning point in the history of Arab unity and solidarity."

Al Itihad, an official newspaper, said that "for such a mini-summit to be held in Abu Dhabi offers a ray of hope to Arabs for many reasons, not the least because of the fact



His Majesty King Abdullah, UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak head into their summit in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. The meeting was held to discuss regional topics (AP photo)

that Sheikh Zayed is renowned, through his repeated calls and numerous efforts to ensure collective Arab efforts and cuss peace process, Iraq, Kosovo solidarity."

The paper added that for the Egyptian president and the monarch, "leaders of two great Arab countries, to join Sheikh Zayed, with his wisdom and unwavering sense of Arab nationalism, in the Abu Dhabi mini-summit also strengthens the hope of some relief being

brought to the present, said Arab situation."

King Abdullah arrived here on Sunday in continuation of an Arab tour. He has already visited Saudi Arabia and Oman, and is expected to visit several other countries soon.

In Abu Dhabi, the King got a rousing reception, which Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti described as closely resembling a family reunion.

The central theme through-

out King Abdullah's visit here was a reaffirmation of the strength of ties between the two countries and a renewal of the UAE's political and economic support for the Kingdom.

Sheikh Zayed and his wife Sheikhha Fatima, as well as other members of the ruling family in Abu Dhabi, offered a warm reception to the King and Queen Rania.

(Continued on page 2)

Khatib leaves for Germany to represent Jordan at Euro-Med conference

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The third Euro-Mediterranean conference which opens today in Stuttgart is expected to dedicate special attention to Jordan on the cultural level, a top European official said on Wednesday.

James Moran, head of the European Commission delegation in Amman, said he suspected "there is something coming out of Stuttgart on the cultural side that will be of particular interest to Jordan."

"Jordan has been through a dramatic time, a great man has passed away," he said, adding that the 15 member states and their Mediterranean partners are fully aware of the very special situation that the Kingdom has passed through following the death of King Hussein, on Feb. 7.

"This will feature in the debate," Moran told the Jordan Times, providing no details.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib left yesterday to head Jordan's delegation to the two-day conference, aimed to foster the spirit of the Barcelona process, launched in 1995, and strengthen political, economic, and cultural ties between Europe and its 12 Mediterranean partners.

According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Khatib will be flanked in Stuttgart by

the Jordanian ambassadors to Germany, Hussein Hamami, and Belgium, Omayya Tougan.

The ministerial conference, which follows similar meetings in Malta in April 1997 and Palermo last June, is slated to table a draft Charter for Peace and Stability and maximise confidence-building measures among the EU and Mediterranean countries, in line with the guidelines set in Barcelona for the political and security "basket" of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

According to Moran, "for the first time, the EU and the Mediterranean partners are expected to get down to business on the aspect of security," so far shadowed by the "economic basket" of the Barcelona process.

On the economic level, the Stuttgart conference will reaffirm and review the strategies for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area by 2010 — the main aim of the partnership — through stepping up programmes to help economies in transition towards market liberalisation, especially by assisting the private sector in upgrading production, obtaining licences, and adjusting to internationally recognised practices to meet the basic requirements to enter the European market.

"Our financial cooperation under the MEDA scheme is squarely targeted towards the transition of private businesses," Moran explained, announcing that a European programme, expected to be finalised and approved by mid-September, will prepare Jordanian entrepreneurs in all sectors to face competition in Europe.

The industrial modernisation programme, which will complement similar efforts by Japan and the U.S., "will be the largest programme of its kind from anywhere in Jordan," Moran said.

The Jordan-EU association agreement, signed in November 1997, has so far been ratified only by the EU Parliament and Spain.

But Moran said hopes are high that it will be ratified by Jordan and the other 14 EU-member states by the year 2000. After being discussed by Parliament last year, the agreement passed through the scrutiny of the Lower House Legal Affairs Committee and is currently before the Financial Affairs Committee.

Many Jordanian businessmen fear that, although the abolition of custom duties has been phased out over a period of 12 years depending on the importance of different products to the Jordanian economy, they will be pushed out of business when the agreement comes into force.

Algeria in political crisis as six presidential contenders withdraw

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algeria's hopes of ending years of bloody turmoil through a presidential election suffered a huge blow on Wednesday when six candidates pulled out on the eve of the vote, charging that victory for the military establishment's choice was a foregone conclusion.

The six withdrew after outgoing President Liamine Zerrouk refused to meet them to discuss their allegations that former Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Boumedfeka was about to take office through vote-rigging.

"We have decided on our collective withdrawal from the presidential elections as well as the non-recognition of the

legitimacy of the results of these elections," the six said in a joint statement.

Zerrouk later announced that the elections would go ahead as planned on Thursday despite the withdrawal of the six candidates.

"I have decided that the electoral process will be taken to its conclusion," he said in a televised address to the nation, adding that the six candidates who pulled out had taken a "very dangerous decision."

Zerrouk dismissed the allegations as "unfounded and unreliable," and appealed to Algeria's 17 million voters to "turn out en masse" for Thursday's election.

"Our country can be proud to

provide the conditions for a free and transparent election. All the commitments that I made have been satisfied, and the election will be carried out in the best conditions of freedom and transparency."

Zerrouk's address came some five hours after the six candidates announced their pullout.

The government's next move will determine whether and to what extent Algeria will be able to recover from devastating economic decline coupled with civil strife which has claimed at least 30,000 lives, according to official figures and 100,000 by Western estimates since 1992.

(Continued on page 2)

U.S. questions Israel's new West Bank settlements

Agencies

THE UNITED States on Wednesday questioned the construction of new Jewish settlements in the West Bank, saying this was contrary to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's stated policies.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu has told us, at all levels and on many occasions, that as a matter of policy there would be no new settlements," State Department spokesman James Rubin said at a briefing.

"Contrary to what we were told, we see an accelerated pattern of Israeli actions that involve both construction of

new settlements as well as an expansion of settlements well beyond their contiguous periphery," Rubin said.

On Wednesday, the Haaretz newspaper reported that U.S. satellite photos reveal that Israel has established at least 18 new Jewish settlements on the West Bank in violation of government promises only to expand existing enclaves in the occupied area.

The aim of the land grab is to extend Jewish control over the West Bank prior to negotiations with the Palestinians on the extent and status of territory to be permanently turned over to their control, it said.

The Palestinians hope to create an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas occupied by Israel in 1967.

The photos showed that Jewish settlers had set up mobile home encampments on 18 West Bank hilltops outside the boundaries of existing settlements.

Twelve of the new camps have been established since Israel signed the Wye River peace accord with the Palestinians in Washington last October, it said.

That agreement explicitly prohibits either side from carrying out "unilateral actions" that change the status of the occupied territories — a provision Washington and the

Palestinians say applies to new settlement building.

Netanyahu suspended the Wye accord in December, alleging Palestinian violations of the deal, and further negotiations have been effectively frozen pending Israeli national elections on May 17.

The satellite photos showed a fewer number of new settlements than reported this week by the leftist Israeli group Peace Now, which said settlers had set up at least 17 new encampments since the Wye accord.

The Peace Now figures could reflect the fact that the settler land grab continues even after the U.S. satellite pictures were taken. Haaretz

gave no date for the photos.

Rubin said both sides have an obligation to pursue Middle East peace, adding: "The issue is whether the government of Israel is serious about doing its part to create the proper environment for peace."

It was the second time in less than a week that Washington has chided Israel's construction of new West Bank settlements.

On Monday, Netanyahu said he was proud that Jewish settlement expansion had gathered steam during his government.

He is campaigning for reelection in Israel's May 17 general election.

NATO investigating Yugoslav claim of 64 Kosovo refugees killed in attack

Agencies

THE WAR in Kosovo took a grimmer turn on Wednesday when the Yugoslav government claimed that at least 64 people had been killed and 25 injured in NATO bombing of two refugee columns.

NATO said it would investigate the reported attack on the convoys near the village of Meha, about five kilometres from the border with Albania.

But the Pentagon said Serb forces escorting the convoy may have attacked and killed some of the civilians after military vehicles in the convoy were hit in a NATO air strike.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the incident happened east of Djakovica in southern Kosovo, the same area in which the Serbs reported that NATO bombs struck the refugee convoy Wednesday, killing 64 civilians.

Bacon said NATO was still investigating, but that there was no indication that NATO planes hit the civilians. He said the NATO pilots reported that they hit only military vehicles.

Bacon said U.S. Army Gen. Wesley Clark, the top NATO commander, told him in a tele-

phone conversation this afternoon that he had received "verbal reports of the possibility" that the refugee convoy were hit, "military people got out and... began to attack civilians in the middle of the convoy."

Bacon said Clark told him there may be reconnaissance imagery available to show what transpired.

"We don't know what the full facts are," Bacon said.

Clark did not mention the possibility that Yugoslav aircraft had attacked the refugees. Earlier, Bacon told reporters that on Wednesday for the first time, U.N. relief workers had reported to NATO that refugees entering Albania had claimed that refugee convoys were being attacked by Yugoslav planes and helicopters.

An AFP reporter who arrived at Meha two hours after the reported bombing said he saw 20 dead and four injured in one of the two bombings. He was present while an investigating judge was counting the bodies.

Nebojsa Vujovic, Yugoslav foreign ministry spokesman, said: "NATO bombs created a new humanitarian catastrophe and tragedy, bombing the two

convoys of refugees returning to their homes" from the border with Albania.

The attacks happened at 1 p.m. (1100 GMT) and between 2:20 p.m. and 3 p.m. (1220 and 1300 GMT).

A 14-year-old boy, Muharem Alija from a nearby village Pace, told the AFP reporter that "grenades were falling from the planes."

Several bodies, including those of a woman and a girl, were seen lying at the roadside, alongside vehicles and tractors packed with personal belongings. One male victim appeared to have been burned to death and six victims were apparently pulled out from the ruins of a house.

The reported attacks came the day after NATO admitted mistakenly bombing a train as it crossed a bridge at Grdelicka Klisura, 300 kilometres south of Belgrade, an attack which Beta news agency on Wednesday said had killed 10 people, injured 16 and left 17 people missing.

Meanwhile in Brussels, the heads of state and government of 15 EU member states and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan were considering a

three-phase peace plan proposed by Germany.

The plan, piloted by Amman, provides for a 24-hour halt to NATO air strikes on Yugoslavia if President Slobodan Milosevic begins to withdraw all his military and paramilitary forces from Kosovo.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said Russia had "almost fully agreed" to his plan.

But he said Russia still had concerns over the make-up of an international peacekeeping force for Kosovo, for which Germany is trying to win Moscow's consent to a United Nations mandate.

The rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) would simultaneously have to commit to a cease fire until the arrival of an international peace keeping force in the province.

The United States said the peace initiative was a "constructive" effort to find a settlement in the conflict.

"The German discussions are fully in line with the conditions that NATO has laid down," State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

(Continued on page 2)



An ethnic Albanian boy, Muharem Alija, 14, cries as he passes by corpses near the Kosovo village of Meja, where Serb sources on Wednesday said 64 people were killed and 25 wounded (Reuters photo)

Lockerbie suspects appear for trial before Scottish judge

CAMP ZEIST (AFP) — Two Libyans suspected of bombing a Boeing 747 over Lockerbie, Scotland, 10 years ago were committed for trial Wednesday.

Al Amine Khalifa Fhimah, 43, and Abdul Basset Ali Al Megrahi, 47, did not enter a formal plea but both have protested their innocence.

They appeared at a closed committal hearing before Scottish Sheriff Principal Graham Cox, a spokesman for the Scottish Office at Camp Zeist said.

Wednesday's hearing was the second in pre-trial committal proceedings. Last Tuesday the suspects appeared before the same judge and were committed

for further examination. Under Scottish law, the suspects had to be committed for trial before Thursday.

The two men, suspected Libyan intelligence agents, are accused of having placed a bomb on Pan American Airways Flight 103.

The aircraft was blown up above the Scottish village of Lockerbie, killing all 259 passengers and crew, plus 11 people on the ground in December 1988.

The trial proper will be held in front of three as yet unnamed Scottish judges, without a jury.

Under Scottish law there is normally a maximum period of 110 days

between committal for trial and the opening of a trial if there is a murder charge, but judicial officials have stated that they expect defence lawyers to ask for a further delay of several months.

Scottish judicial officials in Edinburgh have said they did not expect the trial proper to start within "six months to a year." Some legal experts believe the whole trial could take years to complete.

"The next big step will now be the opening of the trial," David Hamilton, a Scottish Office spokesman said, estimating that "it is very unlikely that this will be before the summer, but it could be."

The two men were speedily extradited by the Netherlands to the Scottish authorities on April 5, the day of their arrival by plane from Libya accompanied by United Nations officials.

They were taken by helicopter to Camp Zeist, a former military base near the central city of Utrecht which the Netherlands has ceded to Britain for the duration of the trial, being conducted under Scottish law.

On their arrest by Scottish police, they were charged with murder, conspiracy to murder and contravention of the Aviation Security Act.



JUST GO BIBI: Palestinians and left-wing Israelis hold up posters picturing a mock ID card for Netanyahu with the words "expired" written over it, during a demonstration between east and west Jerusalem on Wednesday (AFP photo)

Jordan signs JD9.5m water agreement

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government, a joint venture between a British consulting firm and a local consulting company and the European Commission signed on Wednesday a JD9.5 million agreement on two JD9.5 million water projects mainly granted by the EC for the south.

Minister of Water and Irrigation Kamel Mahadin, representatives of the U.K.'s Hyder Consulting and Jordan's Consolidated Consultants and Head of the EC Delegation in Amman James Moran signed the contract for supervising two projects to improve the water supply system of the Karak and Tafila. The first JD2.5 million plan will increase the efficiency of the water supply system in the Karak Governorate's Muta, Hawiya, Jouzeh, Rabba, Qaser, Majdoun and Sirfeh areas, while the second JD6.2 million project will ensure an additional five million cubic metres to Tafila Governorate through the newly drilled six wells in Hasa area. Under the first scheme, a pumping station, reservoir and other facilities will be constructed in Qaser, while three pumping stations and a reservoir of 5,000 cubic metres will be set up in Tafila's Asein Baidah. The EC provided 90 per cent of total cost of the projects, including their JD300,000 preliminary studies, and Jordan funded the rest.

King, Mubarak, UAE president discuss Mideast peace process, Iraq, Kosovo

(Continued from page 1)

President Zayed, who held two rounds of talks with King Abdullah, received Queen Rania in a separate meeting attended by Sheikhha Fatima and the wives of senior members of the ruling family in Abu Dhabi.

Sheikhha Zayed and Sheikhha Fatima also decorated King Abdullah and Queen Rania with the highest honours of the UAE.

Kabariti told the Jordan

Times before Wednesday's trilateral summit that working out a common stand on various pan-Arab issues was one of the key issues to be tackled by the three leaders.

Kabariti described King Abdullah's talks with UAE leaders as extensive and highly productive.

"They covered bilateral relations and all aspects of political and economic issues," Kabariti told the Jordan Times.

The Royal Court chief

said King Abdullah was "deeply impressed by the very, very special reception that was accorded to him in Abu Dhabi by the participation of a large number of members of the royal family."

The official Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported that "the warm welcome given to King Abdullah... reflects the deep-rooted ties between the UAE and Jordan."

"King Abdullah's visit crowns the strong and historical relations between

the two countries by giving them a new push towards the common interests of the two sides," the agency said in a rare commentary.

Kabariti also expressed hope that the visit would help strengthen UAE-Jordanian relations.

"We are very confident that this special visit will be translated into stronger relations in all aspects, particularly political and economic cooperation between the UAE and Jordan," he said.

Algeria in political crisis as six contenders withdraw

(Continued from page 1)

That was the year the military stepped in to cancel legislative elections that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), since banned, was assured of winning.

The army has repeatedly asserted that it would remain neutral in the vote, but Bouteflika is known to have significant backing within the military establishment as well as from a wide spectrum of parties including moderate Islamist groupings.

The six — Hocine Ait Ahmed, Abdullah Djaballah, Mouloud Hamrouche, Ahmad Taleb Ibrahim, Youcef Khatib and Mokdad Sifi — said they have proof of fraud in early voting by the uniformed services and by nomads in the south. On Tuesday they had demanded

that these ballots be declared void.

"We note the persistence of the leadership to deny citizens their right to decide their future and to choose their president, and we hold it responsible for the consequences," their statement said.

No international observers are on hand for the vote. Instead, the National Independent Commission Overseeing the Presidential Election (CNISEP) was set up under the chairmanship of Mohammed Bedjaoui, an Algerian who is a judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Bedjaoui has pledged "not to remain silent" in the face of fraud.

The allegations included instances of electoral lists swollen with the names of dead people and caches of

blank ballots being held in reserve for use during tallying.

Interior Minister Abdul Malek Sellal dismissed the allegations on Tuesday, saying in a communiqué that they were "aimed at casting doubt on the moral integrity of the state, to foment confusion in public opinion in order to influence an election that benefits from every guarantee of transparency and regularity."

Bouteflika was unavailable for comment, but an aide said early Wednesday: "We are continuing calmly to prepare for the election, without concerning ourselves with all this noise."

He said the Bouteflika camp also had grievances "that could be taken to the CNISEP."

When early doubts emerged about Bouteflika's

independence, Zeroual said that he was committed to "assuring the credibility of this election, which should take place in democratic conditions."

It was Zeroual's surprise announcement last September that he planned to cut short his five-year mandate, won in 1995, that precipitated Thursday's vote.

Former Prime Minister Hamrouche, who asked Monday why Bouteflika himself had not voiced concerns over possible vote-rigging, said: "He doesn't need to if he is the choice of the system that is the instrument of electoral fraud."

Hamrouche added: "If there is fraud in these elections, there will be serious consequences for the country."

NATO investigating Yugoslav claim

(Continued from page 1)

"For us, this is a beginning of the discussions of the modalities of how NATO conditions would be implemented but in no way departs from NATO's conditions."

Earlier Wednesday a White House spokesman said Washington would not agree to a halt in NATO air strikes unless Belgrade met all allied demands for the province.

NATO bombs rocked the Kosovo capital at 12:30 p.m. (10:30 GMT) Wednesday, following a series of explosions heard earlier in the day.

Local authorities told AFP that a missile had hit the Albanian-populated village of Sackovac, southeast of Pristina. A second missile fell in an area southwest of the town, sending a plume of smoke into the air.

Earlier, three explosions were heard from an area southwest of Pristina where a Yugoslav army

base and Slatina airport are situated.

The explosions followed dozens of detonations heard from a location some 20 kilometres south of Pristina. The source could not be immediately determined.

At the time of the second two blasts, some 3,000 people had gathered in front of the theatre in Pristina, protesting against the NATO bombing campaign on Yugoslavia.

Four blasts rocked the Kosovo capital of Pristina overnight, after NATO warplanes were heard flying over the region.

Belgrade reported that NATO planes had targeted a hydroelectric plant and hit a company building five times in overnight raids. A railway bridge linking Belgrade to the Adriatic port of Bar in Montenegro was slightly damaged, the official Tanjug news agency reported.

The Serb Information Centre said that a pilotless plane, apparently belonging to the German air

force, was shot down Wednesday by Yugoslav air defence units.

At least 2,000 Kosovo Albanians arrived at the Macedonian border post of Blace on Wednesday, a spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said.

More would-be refugees were believed to be waiting on board trains at the Urosvac and Kragujevac railway stations, Paula Ghedin said.

In Washington, the Pentagon announced a massive increase in NATO firepower ahead of a new phase of round-the-clock air strikes on Yugoslav army and police positions in Kosovo.

Britain and France announced they were sending reinforcements.

NATO's top military commander, General Wesley Clark, has asked for 300 additional U.S. aircraft.

Two dozen AH-64 Apache helicopters were due to arrive in Albania by the end of the week, while some 2,700 support troops

have begun to arrive in Tirana.

Albania announced it was sending reinforcements to the north of the country as reports of fresh Serb shelling near border villages emerged.

In London British Defence Secretary George Robertson charged that indicted Serb war criminal General Ratko Mladic and warlord Zeljko Raznatovic, alias Arkan, were active in Kosovo.

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko meanwhile was given a warm reception by Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade as he became the first head of state to visit Belgrade since the bombing began on March 24.

Milosevic formally asked Lukashenko to allow Yugoslavia to join the Russia-Belarus union.

But one of Russia's deputy prime ministers, Oleg Sytsuyev, warned against any attempt to drag Russia into a military conflict over Kosovo.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

18:00 Basketball matches — Championship of Asia clubs
19:00Le Journal
19:15French programme
19:30News headlines
19:33French programme
20:00 Museums Around the World
20:30 Dr. Quin, the Medicine Woman
21:15Just the Job
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature film: "Another Woman"
23:59End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

18:00The Pink Panther
18:10The Flintstones
18:30Mirror, Mirror
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19:15 Great Moments in Science and Technology
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PRAYER TIMES

03:42Fajr
05:03(Sunrise) Duha
11:36Dhuhr
15:12Asr
18:08Maghreb
19:29Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

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QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information departments at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. (4415200-5), where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:05Sanaa (RJ)
09:05Bombay (RJ)
09:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)
09:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:45Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:05Colombo (RJ)
10:35Beirut (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:30London (RJ)
17:10Kuwait (RJ)
18:10Athens (RJ)
18:45Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
19:05Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
22:50Lamaca (RJ)
23:15Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

07:30Alexandria (BA)
11:15Sanaa, Aden (TY)
12:30Riyadh (SV)
14:15Doha (QR)
14:30Sharjah (AH)
14:40Istanbul (TK)
14:55Abu Dhabi (GF)

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Beirut (RJ)
10:35Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
11:15Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:20Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
11:30Kuwait (RJ)
12:00Paris (RJ)
12:10Athens (RJ)
12:25London (RJ)
19:35Lamaca (RJ)

Other Flights

07:30Alexandria (BA)
11:15Sanaa, Aden (TY)
12:30Riyadh (SV)
14:15Doha (QR)
14:30Sharjah (AH)
14:40Istanbul (TK)
14:55Abu Dhabi (GF)

Other Flights

07:30Alexandria (BA)
11:15Sanaa, Aden (TY)
12:30Riyadh (SV)
14:15Doha (QR)
14:30Sharjah (AH)
14:40Istanbul (TK)
14:55Abu Dhabi (GF)

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

18:00 Basketball matches — Championship of Asia clubs
19:00Le Journal
19:15French programme
19:30News headlines
19:33French programme
20:00 Museums Around the World
20:30 Dr. Quin, the Medicine Woman
21:15Just the Job
21:30Encounter
22:00News in English
22:30 Feature film: "Another Woman"
23:59End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

18:00The Pink Panther
18:10The Flintstones
18:30Mirror, Mirror
19:00Le Journal
19:15 Great Moments in Science and Technology
19:30News headlines
19:33French programme
20:30 Star Trek — The next generation
21:15Full Circle
22:00News in English
22:30Millennium
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

03:42Fajr
05:03(Sunrise) Duha
11:36Dhuhr
15:12Asr
18:08Maghreb
19:29Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Jordan
signs
JD9.5m
water
agreement

Home News

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, April 15-16, 1999

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JTV hopes revenues will help cover expense of Arab Games

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — The United Arab Emirates will lend cameras and technical equipment worth JD10 million to Jordan to enable the Kingdom to offer full media coverage of the August Pan-Arab Games.

Ibrahim Shahzadeh, general manager of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, said after returning from a visit to Abu Dhabi, that UAE Culture Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ben Zayed, had promised to supply Jordan with all necessary technical equipment to broadcast the Aug. 15-31 tournament.

The equipment is property of television stations in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah — three of the six emirates that make up the UAE.

The minister also said he is willing to rent any additional equipment to complete the supply, and that a group of skilled technicians will be sent to operate the equipment.

The government, its hands tied by a severe budget deficit, will not

pay for the equipment.

His Majesty King Abdullah is currently visiting the UAE as part of a tour of Arab states.

"This [aid] is provided on basis of the strong ties between both nations and their leadership," Shahzadeh said.

He also thanked HRH Prince Faisal, president of the Higher Committee of the Pan-Arab Games, for his relentless efforts which facilitated the acquisition of the service.

A JD2 million media centre will be set up at the Royal Cultural Centre throughout the duration of the games. The cost of setting up the centre will be covered by the tournament's JD4.3 million budget.

However, Shahzadeh said he has hopes Jordan Television might be able to contribute to covering the costs of the centre out of broadcasting revenues earned during the tournament.

The tournament will be attended by 19 Arab countries.

GAM to reduce expenses after JD9 million revenue loss to general amnesty

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The Greater Amman Municipality is forging ahead with plans to reduce expenses, as a result of the GAM deficit in its budget. Mayor Nidal Hadid told the Jordan Times.

"The GAM is facing a deficit as a result of the controversial amnesty decree," GAM officials said.

The amnesty exempted those charged with traffic violations from fines, a component of GAM's annual revenue, already levied.

The GAM's services are extended to just less than half of Jordan's 4.6 million population. Officials estimate the loss to the capital at JD9 million in uncollected traffic fines.

"We were expecting the highest ever budget for the GAM this year, but the controversial amnesty has created a deficit for the GAM as we passed around JD9 million in uncollected traffic fines," Hadid said.

"The GAM will try to solve the deficit by reducing the municipality's expenses as much as possible and setting up investment projects which could raise revenues. We are also going to postpone certain expensive schemes," he added.

"We will work on computerising all the GAM's dealings in order to have accurate documents and an accurate evaluation of taxes," Hadid told the Jordan Times.

The mayor stressed that there are no plans to increase taxes as "the economic situation in Jordan does not help citizens to pay more."

The GAM recently decided to remove electronic billboards constructed in residential areas following complaints from residents who claimed that the billboards were located "inappropriately."

"These electronic billboards were erected on residential buildings, and the larger ones prevented sunlight from entering the last floors of these buildings," Hadid said.

The mayor added that "citizens who live in these apartments have also complained that the electronic billboards keep the apartments lit at night," Hadid explained.

According to Hadid the companies that erected billboards in residential areas have been issued warnings to remove them.

The mayor said the GAM also has a plan to install cameras on traffic lights along busy streets in Amman to monitor traffic violations.

Hadid said, "The aim is to stop deadly accidents caused by traffic violations."

In addition, the GAM plans to install parking metres along busy streets in the capital to ease parking congestion and to prevent illegal parking, Hadid said.

The mayor said the municipality is working to improve services to the city's residents, such as "greening up" the city's streets by planting trees along the roadside, better night time illumination and finding space for more public gardens.

He added, "We also have plans to deal with environmental pollution," the mayor said.

No stroll in the park for JMA elections contenders

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Doctors vying for the presidency of the Jordan Medical Association are wrapping up their campaigns, and observers expect that the battle will not be a stroll in the park for any contender.

Six doctors have thrown their hats in the presidential ring, and 35 others are running for membership on the executive council, which will likely be a mixture of all trends, observers said on Wednesday.

A very heated battle for the president's post is expected to shape up between the Green List, nationalists and leftists, led by Hassan Badran, their key rival being the White List, the Coalition of Islamists and Independents for Change and Renewal, led by Tareq Tahboub.

Three other groups will compete on the sidelines, doctors say. The National Professional list, led by Ahmad Amrout, from Nazareth, Amrout is also expected to run neck and neck with Badran and Tahboub.

The Independent Block is said to be supported by Fateh

and led by Ra'if Faris, Khalil Barakat, and Mahmoud Karameh are running independently. Barakat and Karameh are highly respected in their field and are expected to fan the campaign's fire.

"Most of the other lists include doctors who know nothing about the association business and are barely known by the medical community," said one doctor who requested anonymity.

The six contenders echo each other in their political orientations. They all oppose "normalisation" of relations with Israel, and most oppose the peace treaty with Israel which they believe is a sell-out of Palestinian aspirations.

They also support Iraq's stand against the United States and call for a general Arab reconciliation.

Some believe that the campaign muddle is becoming even murkier because of the similarity in the contestants' campaigns and the programmes they offered.

"It is really hard to tell who will win because all are focusing on the professional side rather than on the political side in their campaigns," said

Odeh Odeh, a journalist.

The fever of the campaigning, nevertheless, has failed to inspire widespread enthusiasm for the vote among doctors, wary and disappointed by the practices of the Islamists in the council. The reign of the Islamists over the association has been haunted by allegations of misuse of funds and other fraud.

According to one doctor around JD750,000 have been embezzled from the association during the past few years.

"Doctors are seeking change," said an observer who preferred anonymity.

"The Islamists showed their capabilities over the past 10 years. It was not enough. Things have become worse. The internal affairs of the association are rotten," said another doctor.

However, the campaign so far has passed without major incidents, although nine contenders dropped out from the race earlier last week, including Salim Marawa who was running for the helm.

Earlier last month, nationalists and leftist lost their last stronghold over the Jordan Professional Associations

after being dealt a stunning defeat in the Jordan Bar Association elections, losing the president's post to the Islamists.

During the 1970s and 80s, when martial law was still in force, associations were the most prominent outlets for political expression and acted as political fora in the absence of legalised political parties.

The executive councils, during the 1970s, and early 1980s, were dominated by nationalists, who have always retained the presidency and the majority of the councils' seats.

"The divisions and lack of coordination among lawyers was the sole reason for their loss of presidency," said Odeh.

According to the associations' internal regulations, the candidate must win the majority of votes to secure the seat of the president. If no majority is secured, voting moves into a second round.

Around 2,500 doctors out of 4,823 JMA members are eligible to vote, according to an official from the medical association.

Celebrated French pianist to perform in Amman tonight

By Jean-Claude Elias

AMMAN — The French Cultural Center in Amman has invited the celebrated pianist Frank Braley to play in the capital. He will perform on Thursday 15 April, at the auditorium of the Terra Sancta College, in Jabal Weibdeh.

The programme will include the Suite in D minor by Georg F. Haendel, the Sonata in C sharp minor by Ludwig V. Beethoven (opus 27, No.21, a Prelude, Choral and Fugue by Cesar Franck, a selection of Preludes by Claude Debussy and Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin.

Born in 1968, Braley started to study the piano when he was only four. By the time he was ten, he was already performing as a soloist with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France, placing him in the category of elite young prodigies who become concert pianists before their teens.

Braley talents, however,

are more than just technical virtuosity — a quality that many modern pianists can achieve these days. About Frank Braley, the French magazine "Le Monde de la Musique" said that he is a rare combination of technical perfection, intelligent performance and musical sensitivity and expression.

The pianist has recorded several CDs and has won the prestigious Queen Elizabeth of Belgium International Competition in 1991. It was the very first time he ever entered an international competition. He regularly plays outside his country, France, and has already performed in Japan, the USA, Canada and Europe. Music critics have compared him to legendary pianists like Claudio Arrau (Chilean-born American), Radu Lupu (Romanian) and Andras Schiff (Hungarian). Braley is now considered as one of most talented living pianists in France and possibly in the world.

What's going on

- Films**
 - German film "Jakob der Lügner" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Saturday April 17 at 7:30 p.m.
 - "Renaissance: In Full Bloom" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. (To be preceded by a lecture by Dr. Mazin Asfour at 5:30 p.m.)
 - "The Lost World" at the American Centre, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
 - Wedding Flower Fiesta at the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel, Jabal Amman on Friday April 16 (10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.)
- Concert**
 - Musical performance by Franck Braley at Terra Sancta College, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.
- Amman Theatre Festival**
 - Thursday
 - Palestinian play "Abu Arab Driven to the Corner" at Osama Machini Theatre at 6:00 p.m.; Egyptian play "Layali Al Warshah," Dutch play "Male/Female," and Iraqi play "The Cowardly Men" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. respectively.
 - Friday
 - Palestinian play "Abu Arab Driven to the Corner" at Osama Machini Theatre at 6:00 p.m.; Tunisian play "In Search of Aida," and Palestinian play "The Emigrant," at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

Shirsh Zallouh: Viagra au naturel, home grown in Lebanon

By Muhammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The anti-impotency Shirsh Zallouh herb, better known as "the Lebanese Viagra," has found its way to Jordanian pharmacy shelves despite doctors' skepticism over the efficiency of the tiny shrub.

Social and religious restrictions notwithstanding, men from all walks of life have put their inhibitions aside by openly asking for the wild plant in the hopes of stimulating their sexual performance and easing physical fatigue.

"People from all social strata come to ask for the plant, and they do it boldly, without blushing," said Abdul Hamid Hussa, a pharmacist who sells the herb at his Jabal Hussein pharmacy.

"My customers, who are mostly educated, know exactly what they are looking for. They generally are aged 35 and more," Hussa told the Jordan Times.

"We receive so many telephone calls from women inquiring about the efficiency of the herb as well as other detailed



Photo taken from CNN website

information, but they never show up. It is always men who come to buy it," Hussa said.

Other customers volunteer to give "unneeded and unnecessary" explanation for their purchase and unsolicited, he added.

"One man told me he wants to buy it for his father, another for his elder brother in Zarqa who does not have a chance to come to Amman."

Others, however, come in complete secrecy to

cure their impotence or that of their sons who cannot deflower their brides. Abu Ahmad, a 71-year-old herb retailer in downtown Amman, said with a cunning smile.

The plant, grown high in Lebanon's mountains for millennia, has for years been prescribed by traditional herbalists as a stimulant.

But Shirsh Zallouh became somewhat of a fad last year, after many Arab states banned the import of

the U.S. impotency drug Viagra.

Lebanon's ribald newspapers dubbed the herb the "Lebanese Viagra without any side effects," and a trend was born.

Meanwhile, Viagra remains the hottest selling drug since the Ministry of Health approved its import for men suffering from sexual impotence.

However, many men began showing a preference for the mountain grown herb after the local

importer began running adds in local newspapers earlier this month.

While some specialists doubt the Lebanese plant's medicinal value, men are flocking to buy the "hairy root" herb from pharmacies across the Kingdom.

The small shrub, with thin leaves and little white or yellow flowers, has a "male" taproot or a "female" forked root and grows at more than 2,500 metres on Mount Hermon, at the joint borders of Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

It can be picked from August to October, after the roots mature and before snow makes the mountains inaccessible. It belongs to the parsley family and has the Latin name Ferula Hormonis.

But Hussa and other agriculture experts advised Jordanians not to waste their time by attempting to plant the herb in their own gardens, even in mountainous areas such as Ajloun, 50 kilometres north of Amman.

"The powers of this root were already known at the time of King Solomon and the Queens of Sheba, especially Queen Balqis, who built a still-visited palace

on the side of Mount Hermon for their summer trysts," said Abu Ahmad. Hassan Abu Zeina, who heads an agency that is the sole distributor of the herb in Jordan, said he was racing against all odds to meet increasing demand.

Herbalists who market the root say that not only is it natural, but delivers more bang for your buck. Each 25-leaf bag package is selling for JD8.50 compared to JD36 for four Viagra tablets. Zallouh "takes hold" within half an hour of consumption, herbalists say, and its effect is longer lasting. Viagra, on the other hand, is a one-night-only aid.

Usually the roots of Shirsh Zallouh are eaten after being soaked in wine or are ground into powder that is put into capsules or mixed with tea. In Syria, the powder is mixed with honey.

Na'im Farah specialising in fertility, expressed scepticism about its effectiveness, saying: "We as doctors trained in Western medicine... don't use herbs."

Another doctor echoed Farah's concern saying that herbs need to be tested

in laboratories equipped with high technology before being sold on a commercial basis. "Sexual impotencies differ from one person to another, and cannot be corrected only by herbs," said the doctor who preferred anonymity.

Abu Ahmad said that it was originally discovered by shepherds who saw its effect on their goats well ahead of the usual September mating season, in certain pastures.

Abu Ahmad said his customers have reported "dazzling" results, with some

90 per cent of them expressing their "pleasure" with the results.

"It is a natural product, without chemical ingredients, more powerful than Viagra and without its side effects. It is also fortifying for the heart, the nervous system, the brain and helps more than Ginseng for cell regeneration," he said.

"The [bitter] taste is a little rough," Mulitschev, a partner of Abu Ahmad, said. "It's good to put it in milk or fruit juice, which makes the taste more acceptable."



Photo taken from CNN website

India has achieved 'minimum' nuclear deterrent

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday said India had achieved a "minimum" nuclear deterrent with the successful weekend launch of a medium-range ballistic missile.

"The entire process of achieving a minimum deterrent has been completed," Vajpayee told workers from his Hindu nationalist BJP party.

His announcement coincided with the test-launch of a ballistic missile by rival Pakistan.

"Now India is fully secured," Vajpayee said, referring to the April 11 test of the indigenous Agni-II missile, which can carry a one-tonne nuclear payload up to 2,500 kilometres.

The launch signalled India's capacity to develop an effective nuclear deterrent following its underground nuclear tests in May 1998.

"We are satisfied that we are now fully capable of defending our borders," he said, adding Pakistan had no reason to feel threatened by the Agni-II test.

"We have prepared Agni-II keeping in mind our security interests as we are surrounded by nuclear weapons all over. Our missiles should not cause concern to anyone," he said.

The United States, which imposed a series of sanctions following the May nuclear tests, has been trying to pin down New Delhi on its minimum deterrent requirements during negotiations aimed at persuading it to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

India had refused to quantify its deterrence needs, saying they would alter with the changing regional and international security situation.

Vajpayee has indicated India's willingness to sign the CTBT before the cut-off date of September but has linked such a move to a lifting of U.S. sanctions.

For its part the U.S. wants India and Pakistan to sign the treaty, halt further production of fissile material, strengthen export con-

trols and exercise mutual restraint in missile and weapons development.

On Wednesday Vajpayee said the Agni-II launch was "linked" to a weaponisation programme based on last year's nuclear tests.

"We had announced in December that a developed version of the Agni missile will be launched. Now we have accomplished that."

Vajpayee said India and Pakistan had informed each other in advance of their latest missile tests, in accordance with the Lahore Declaration signed during Vajpayee's landmark visit to Pakistan in February.

"Relations between India and Pakistan will progress further," he said.

He also underlined India's stance that the five recognised nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — had no monopoly over nuclear weapons.

"These big five want their supremacy. But we don't accept that. While some countries go on building nuclear weapons, they want others not to follow suit. This cannot go on."

He accused previous governments of giving in to foreign pressure and shying away from conducting underground nuclear tests since India's maiden blast in 1974. "But we withstood all pressures... we knew about the repercussions."

Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh rejected Western fears that the Indian and Pakistani missile launches would renew an arms race in South Asia.

"There is no arms race. There is no danger," Singh said.

Indian National Security Council member Atal Karim agreed, saying the rival launches were "routine" and "fuelled by political necessities in the two countries."

Former army chief General Vishwanath Sharma said: "The rival test-firings will not lead to war. In fact they lessen the fear of war because it is a kind of a bluff and counter-bluff."

Two million gather for conclusion of Sikh celebrations

ANANDPUR SAHIB, India (AP) — An estimated two million Sikhs concluded celebrations of 300 years of their faith Wednesday with prayers at one of Sikhism's holiest shrines, momentarily putting aside the bitter rivalry that has divided its leaders.

The two camps united in prayer, but political and religious leaders were quick to revert to one-upmanship at competing rallies intended to consolidate their strength and denigrate one another.

Parkash Singh Badal, a powerful politician who governs Punjab state, was bitterly criticised by Gurbaran Singh Tohra, a deposed chief of a committee that oversees all Sikh gurdwaras, or places of worship.

Tohra urged Sikhs to boycott Badal for sacking Ranjit Singh, his protégé and former high priest of the Akal Takht, Sikhism's holiest shrine in the ornate golden temple in the town of Amritsar. The sacking exacerbated a bitter power struggle within the community between moderates, led by Badal, and radicals under Tohra.

Tohra accused Badal of trying to control Sikh religious institutions to boost his political power, and claimed his government was corrupt and high-handed.

"Sikhs should pledge on this day to liberate their religion, which Badal threatens to capture to perpetuate the rule of his family," said Ranjit Singh.

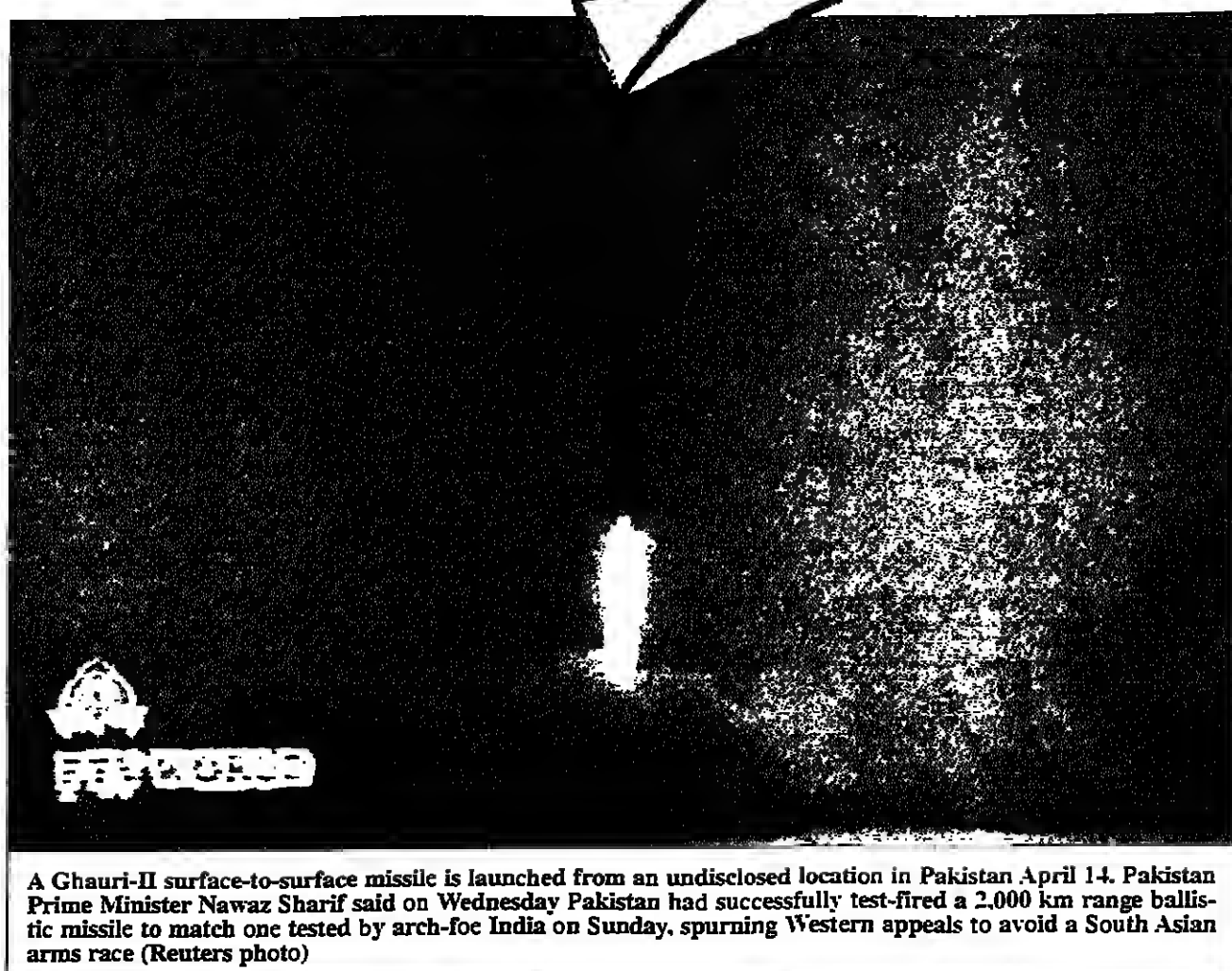
In the past, Badal has said the radicals are encouraging separatism, a charge they deny.

But on Wednesday, Tohra and Ranjit Singh shared the dais with known backers of a separatist movement that was crushed by Indian security forces in the late 1980's.

A group of 70 activists of the Dal Khalsa, a separatist group, interrupted Badal's speech at the demanding the release of young Sikhs arrested during the militancy in Punjab.

The hecklers were led away by the police and released outside the town.

An estimated two million people took part in the concluding celebrations of the Tercentenary. The shortage of covered space forced people to spill out of enclosures into streets, but they danced and sang joyously in the heat.



A Ghauri-II surface-to-surface missile is launched from an undisclosed location in Pakistan April 14. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Wednesday Pakistan had successfully test-fired a 2,000 km range ballistic missile to match one tested by arch-rival India on Sunday, spurning Western appeals to avoid a South Asian arms race (Reuters photo)

Indian government loses majority as key ally withdraws support

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling coalition lost its thin parliamentary majority Wednesday when its second largest partner formally withdrew from the alliance, leaving the government on the brink of collapse.

The government is expected to face a motion of no-confidence when parliament resumes on Thursday.

The AIADMK party, which pulled its ministers out of the cabinet last week, announced at the presidential palace here that it was quitting the 13-month-old coalition.

AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha Jayaram told reporters that she had communicated her decision to Indian President K.R. Narayanan and that the opposition was confident of forming a new government.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party, which dominates the coalition, reacted defiantly, accusing Jayalalitha of playing "an irresponsible and destabilising game."

"We accept this challenge," said BJP spokesman Venkatiah Naidu.

"We have the strength. As and when required, we will establish our majority in parliament."

Earlier Wednesday, Vajpayee had said he was confident of holding on to power.

The AIADMK withdrawal raised the political temperature in the Indian capital, where all eyes are now on the opposition parties to see if they can overcome their own differences to set up a credible alternative government.

Opposition leaders said they would discuss the possibility of tabling a no-confidence motion in parliament on Thursday.

The loss of AIADMK's 18 MPs leaves Vajpayee's coalition 15 seats short of a majority in the 545-member parliament.

But government officials insist they can make up the shortfall by winning over small opposition groupings.

The main opposition Congress party welcomed the AIADMK decision and demanded Vajpayee's immediate resignation.

The ruling coalition has "no moral, constitutional or political right to continue in office," Congress spokesman Arjun Singh told reporters.

"Therefore, the Congress party demands that Vajpayee should step down forthwith in keeping with well established democratic norms and traditions," Singh said.

A Congress delegation was due to meet President Narayanan later Wednesday.

If no party or coalition is able to form a government, new elections could follow — a scenario that both the Hindu nationalists and the opposition are keen to avoid.

Jayalalitha said she pulled out of the ruling coalition because the government "was a threat to national security and it is simply not interested in taking steps to (protect) the sovereignty of the country."

"The opposition will succeed in forming a new and viable government," she said after her 45-minute meeting with India's head of state. "We will ensure there are no (early) elections."

She also pledged to hold discussions with Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, who said for the first time Tuesday her party was not averse to forming a new coalition.

Earlier the Congress had indicated it would like to form a new government on its own with other parties propping it up from the outside.

But fresh divisions within the opposition took away some of its punch, with the communists refusing to throw in their lot with Jayalalitha.

The Communists, who have been acting as a binding force among the plethora of anti-BJP parties, hold nearly 50 parliament seats and would be a crucial factor in any new government.

Mandela sets election date

JOHANNESBURG (R) — President Nelson Mandela on Wednesday formally declared June 2 as the date for the election that will see him pass on the leadership of South Africa to a new political generation.

"The president signed the proclamation this morning in his office in Pretoria. The election is now firmly cast in stone," presidential spokesman Parks Mankahlana told Reuters.

Mandela had previously said June 2 was a target for the country's second all-race election, but was prevented by the constitution from confirming it earlier.

A series of court challenges by opposition parties had also cast doubt on whether the planned polling day would be possible.

The election is virtually guaranteed to renew the ruling African National Congress' (ANC) mandate and bring to power president-in-waiting Thabo Mbeki, 56,

who is expected to speed up the process of narrowing the country's social inequalities.

Mbeki is scheduled to be inaugurated in the middle of June, allowing the 80-year-old Mandela to retire with his wife Graca Machel to his birthplace in rural Qunu, a small village in eastern Cape.

Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison under white minority rule, bid farewell to the country's parliament last month at the same podium where F.W. de Klerk, the country's last white president, announced Mandela's release from prison in 1990.

A Reuters poll of analysts forecast the ANC will win 61 per cent of votes cast by the 22.8 million electorate, dwarfing opposition parties which are expected to attack the ANC during the campaign on issues of unemployment, crime and corruption.

The ANC launched its manifesto last month focusing on Mbeki's programme of social and economic change including commitments to improve the lives of millions of black South Africans deprived of basic services under apartheid.

The official opposition New National Party (NNP), whose former incarnation as the national party imposed and finally dismantled racial segregation, said a pending court case to allow South Africans abroad to vote would not change the election date and welcomed Mandela's move.

"Now we know the date of the election we can get our campaign into full swing," said an NNP spokeswoman.

As the official campaign season gets under way, the parties plan to spend money on getting their message across particularly through radio in a country where television ownership is still limited.

Analysts forecast that political violence is likely to mar the run-up to the election.

It has already erupted in the most populous province of KwaZulu-Natal where the tinderbox town of Richmond saw a spate of revenge attacks early this year after the murder of a local opposition party leader.

The impoverished townships around the west coast city of Cape Town have also been plunged into deeper levels of gang warfare with regular attacks on police and army forces.

But news that the election date had been confirmed boosted an already buoyant foreign exchange market where the rand firmed to its strongest level against the dollar in two months.

"Overseas funds had been buying dollars for rand on fears that the election would be postponed. Now that the election has been confirmed, it removes any uncertainty and we are seeing good dollar sales from offshore," said a senior trader.

The pursuit was called off after the pair of ships reached international waters and headed towards North Korea. Japan later confirmed that the ships entered a North Korean military zone.

But the North has denied any involvement.

Japan reconnaissance craft unable to spot mystery ship

TOKYO (AP) — Japan dispatched a military reconnaissance plane early Wednesday to follow up on a mystery ship sighting, but called off the search later in the day after no suspicious vessel was spotted, Kyodo news agency reported.

The sighting comes less than a month after Japanese naval destroyers fired warning shots at a pair of falsely marked ships which had entered Japan's territorial waters.

Japan has since blamed North Korea, which denies involvement.

On Wednesday, a P3C naval scout aircraft was sent out when the defence agency learned that a mysterious ship was seen between South Korea's Cheju island and the Goto islands off the coast of Nagasaki prefecture in Japan, Kyodo reported.

Nagasaki is about 982 kilometres southwest of Tokyo. Japanese coast guard

patrol boats and planes were also mobilised, but the search ended Wednesday evening after nothing turned up, Kyodo said, citing unidentified government officials.

A defence agency spokesman told the Associated Press that he was unaware of any such search. In the earlier incursion, Japan's coast guard spotted two suspected spy ships off the western coast on March 23.

Japanese patrol boats and naval destroyers chased them for about 24 hours and fired warning shots in the first such action since World War II.

The pursuit was called off after the pair of ships reached international waters and headed towards North Korea. Japan later confirmed that the ships entered a North Korean military zone.

But the North has denied any involvement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Congress demands Indian PM's resignation

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's main opposition Congress party demanded Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's immediate resignation Wednesday after his coalition government lost its parliamentary majority. The ruling coalition has "no moral, constitutional or political right to continue in office," Congress spokesman Arjun Singh told reporters.

"Therefore, the Congress party demands that Vajpayee should step down forthwith in keeping with well established democratic norms and traditions," Singh said. The government lost its majority Wednesday when the second largest party in the coalition, the AIADMK, formally withdrew from the alliance. Singh's remarks came at the end of a stormy meeting between Congress president Sonia Gandhi and senior party leaders to review the political situation. With the withdrawal of the AIADMK's 18 MPs, Vajpayee's coalition is 15 seats short of a majority in the 545-member lower house of parliament. The government has been desperately lobbying for the support of small opposition parties in a bid to ward off an expected no-confidence motion when parliament resumes on Thursday.

Apology and damages for Diana's brother

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana's brother on Wednesday accepted a public apology and substantial libel damages after newspaper allegations about proceeds from a memorial concert. Earl Spencer had sued Express newspaper on Sunday after an article which appeared late last year headlined "My story of Earl's £1 million concert cash". Spencer, whose sister was killed in a Paris car crash in August 1997, has now accepted an apology and undisclosed libel damages. The court case centred round a memorial concert staged at the Spencer family home of Althorp in June 1998. Spencer's lawyer Simon Elkins said the central question raised by the article was over what happened to the money generated by the concert. "In fact Earl Spencer had no access to the concert proceeds and made no charge whatsoever for the use of Althorp," he told London's high court. "He also made no charge for his staff's own involvement in the concert and even bought his own ticket to attend the concert," he said. The concert was staged by a company that specialised in such events. Spencer had no control or involvement in its organisation.

Angolan army claims capture of two central districts from rebels

LUANDA (AFP) — The Angolan army said on Wednesday it had recaptured two areas in the central Bie province from UNITA rebels, destroying two armoured cars and a tank in the process. The districts, Kunhynga and Chipeta, lie 30 km north of Kuito, a town under renewed assault from forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and some 550 kilometres southeast of the capital. On Tuesday, Luanda said it had taken a strategically important military post at Kune, near Kuito. The districts lie around 100 kilometres south of Andulo, where UNITA has its one of its main headquarters. An army spokesman said government troops had no intention of marching on Andulo, which they had unsuccessfully tried to take early last month. Fighting between the army and the rebels resumed in earnest last November with the collapse of peace accords signed in November 1994. The United Nations put most of the blame for this collapse on UNITA, and the movement's failure to disarm and restore its territories to the government.

Unemployed man sentenced for being Mardi Gras bomber

LONDON (AP) — A 61-year-old unemployed man was sentenced Wednesday to 21 years in prison for bombing branches of a supermarket chain and a bank in an attempt to extort money. Edgar Pearce was convicted after admitting he was the so-called Mardi Gras bomber, believed to have masterminded a string of 36 attacks over four years aimed at Sainsbury stores and branches of Barclays Bank. Pearce pleaded guilty to charges of blackmail, wounding, possessing firearms and causing an explosion. In sentencing Pearce at the Old Bailey, judge Michael Hyam said he had shown a "cynical disregard" for members of the public during his two blackmail campaigns, which took place between December 1994 and April 1998. Hyam said it was only due to "good fortune" that no one was killed or seriously injured by any of the bombs. Many of the crudely built devices — which came in various packaging, including video cases, shopping bags and even the spines of books — failed to explode. Pearce's attorney, Nadine Radford, said her client was a heavy drinker who suffered brain damage in 1992 when he had a stroke. The stroke caused a personality disorder and led to his life of crime, she said. "He never intended, in his own mind, to cause someone injury," Radford said.

Philippine Catholic priest charged with rape

MANILA (AFP) — A Roman Catholic priest was Wednesday charged with the rape of a 15-year-old girl in an apparent first in the Philippines, state prosecutors said. The 52-year-old assistant parish priest from the northern Philippines could face the death penalty if convicted of raping the girl last October, state prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco said. Justice Department officials said they believed this was the first case of a priest being indicted for rape in this largely Roman Catholic nation.

11 condemned bandits publicly executed in DR Congo

KINSHASA (AFP) — Eleven condemned bandits in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have been executed by firing squad in public, the press in Kinshasa reported on Wednesday. The executions took place Tuesday in the central diamond town of Mbuji-Mayi, in Kasai Oriental province following convictions for armed attacks handed down by a military tribunal, according to the daily Le Phare. The paper, which cited military sources, did not say whether those convicted had asked the head of state for clemency. Judgments of military courts are not subject to appeal. Security has deteriorated in Mbuji-Mayi recently and the public executions were carried out as a deterrent, the paper said. In late March, 13 people, including a woman, were sentenced to death in Lubumbashi for armed robbery, rape and associating with criminals. On March 11 a paramilitary police officer was also sentenced to death in Kinshasa for the murder of a colleague. Last year, military courts have handed down dozens of death sentences on soldiers and civilians accused of murder and violent rape. Around 60 of the sentences have been carried out.

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Major step

CHILD ABUSE is poised to get a real hearing today when a one-day workshop on the subject is to be held under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah. Queen Rania, herself is spearheading a national effort to end or at least reduce the plight of children especially their exploitation and abuse, a social ill long swept under the carpet. The British Council also is to be commended for sponsoring the workshop.

The National Institute of Forensic Medicine (NIFM) is also working to combat child abuse by cooperating with Liverpool University, which since 1998, has been offering technical, professional and financial support to NIFM in a bid to reverse the tide of violence against children. Some 2,500 crimes against minors, including murder, attempted murder, abduction, criminal assault, rape and attempted rape were committed between 1993 and 1996. The crime rate against children is expected to have increased since then due to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the country, according to sociologists.

Professionals from the Jordan River Foundation, the ministries of health and social development, schools of medicine, the Family Protection Unit at the Public Security Department and others are expected to take part in today's determined effort to respond to the ever-increasing list of crimes being perpetrated against children.

Although the participants agree on what needs to be done, they differ on how to go about attaining these objectives. Amending current legislation by adding teeth to the existing punitive measures may ameliorate some of the suffering of children but will not solve them. The real problem starts at home where most of these crimes occur. Breaking up of homes, lack of human rights culture especially when it comes to minors, lack of sufficient information on the crisis, improper reporting procedures, and inefficient administration of justice are all features of the recurrent crisis of child abuse and exploitation. It is the hope of all of us that with the participation and support of Queen Rania, our national efforts will embark in earnest this time to find at least some of answers and remedies to some of the dimensions of the problem.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Faded Faneek said Jordan should build a nuclear reactor for peaceful purposes, especially for desalination and electricity generating projects. When Egypt and Israel signed the peace treaty 20 years ago, the U.S. gave a nuclear reactor to both countries for peaceful means, added Faneek, who noted that although Jordan signed a similar deal, it did not get such a reactor. Nuclear power will be the main source of energy in future, and might be the only fundamental solution to Jordan's chronic water shortage because even the Desal aquifer can only cover Amman's water needs for 30 years, said the writer, wondering what the Kingdom will do after this period. Because water desalination is costly, and will necessitate a hike in prices, and water resources are being depleted year after year, the country is fast moving towards a real shortage crisis, he warned. Water is no longer free of charge like air, there is a price to pay for its production cost, and those who cannot pay will have to ration their consumption, Faneek said. Fortunately, the government has made water one of its top priorities, and this must include constructing dams, controlling consumption, recycling and banning certain crops like bananas, he said. However, the key element in solving the water crisis is to desalinate sea water through nuclear energy. The U.S. stresses its support to Jordan all the time; why should not this be translated into providing nuclear power, Faneek asked.

Al Ra'i's Taher Adwan quoted a Jordanian businessman as saying that one of the reasons behind the failure of many companies is a board of directors, in which a chairman is given free reign to hire relatives and friends regardless of their qualifications. According to Adwan, the manner in which a chairman selects members will cause economic losses for shareholders, the country and employees. The writer argued that the party to tackle this problem should be the government and particularly the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In this regard, he said, the ministry did a good job through controllers, who revealed real cases of financial and administrative excesses in some companies. Adwan stressed the need for a certain monitoring and auditing mechanism, or a regulation which "automatically" would investigate a company's losses in order to distinguish between losses resulting from pure economic problems or those caused by corruption. Adwan called for setting up special specifications for board members, in order to control the way such members handle their duties to serve the national economy.

The need to restructure Arab-Arab relations

FOR THE GREATER part of this century, Arab-Arab relations have not been what we exactly desired. The last years of the Ottoman rule were not particularly pretty, and the European colonial era was dark, humiliating and disastrous. The independence days (the second half of the century, for most Arab countries) witnessed some moments of hope and glory, and some good, tangible achievements. But the days of independence were by no means satisfactory.

Largely, they have been days of impulsive words or acts, of false or unrealistic dreams and of unhealthy competition among the Arab countries themselves. In them, we have seen more (much more) emotional rhetoric, hollow sermons and lofty poetry than sense and serious, down-to-earth plans. The Arab Nation has largely been (and still is) divided, factionalised, fragmented and almost hopelessly at odds with itself. For the most part, relations among the Arab brethren have been characterised not only by false claims and illusion but also by mistrust, tension and — at times — animosity.

There have been wars of words in the press and media, waged ferociously at times. And there have also been literal skirmishes

and wars. Suffice it to say that the Arab citizen finds it easier to travel to many foreign nations than to the individual countries of which his own mother nation is composed.

This is sad — worse than sad in fact.

Potentially, the Arab Nation possesses all that would enable it to be a heaven: its central geographical location, its rich landscape and climate varieties, the legacy of its complex past, its culture, its multiculturalism, its incredible natural resources, its wealth, its human resources, etc. Tragically, the potential has not been realised.

Some of the reasons have already been suggested. There are many reasons, in fact. Bad attitudes, wrong approaches, absence of planning, lack of coordination, jealousy, etc.

Two reasons — ironically obvious enough but invisible nonetheless — seem to me to stand in the way of meaningful Arab-Arab cooperation, coordination and complementarity. The first is over-politicisation, and the second is over-poeticisation.

For most of the century, relations among Arab nations have been hampered by these two factors. In the first instance, politics has stood in the way. The ori-

entations or ideologies of the individual regimes in the Arab World have spoiled the overall relations. Even though we speak of a rich Arab World, in terms of natural and human resources, and even though we pride ourselves on this happy fact, Arab regimes or governments have not allowed nature to take its course. Rather than facilitate movement, cooperation, coordination, joint projects, and allow positive feelings to emerge and develop, they have — at times maliciously, at times foolishly — obstructed them. Petty politics and narrow regime interests have interfered very negatively.

Politics, in other words, exceeded its limits.

But so did patriotism. A very nasty contradiction prevailed. While suspicion, mistrust and animosity have reigned deep-down, exaggerated patriotism has flourished externally. Much of what was said at joint high-level meetings was poetry; much of what was said in joint communications was poetry; much of what was said at conferences (political, social, economic, developmental, scientific, etc.) was poetry. Poetry, poetry everywhere.

As the countdown for the Millennium has started (less than a year now), Arab-Arab relations

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

need to be structured from now on on an entirely different basis. Surely, one must learn from the experiences, faults and mistakes of the past.

One can propose several ideas here, all obvious enough. My proposal, however, is simple: if the problem lies in over-politicisation and over-poeticisation of Arab-Arab relations, the solution lies, simply, in de-politicisation and de-poeticisation.

Arab regimes are called upon to allow relations among the Arab countries to evolve and develop apart from politics, apart from political orientations or ideologies. Politics need to be put aside, to make room for educa-

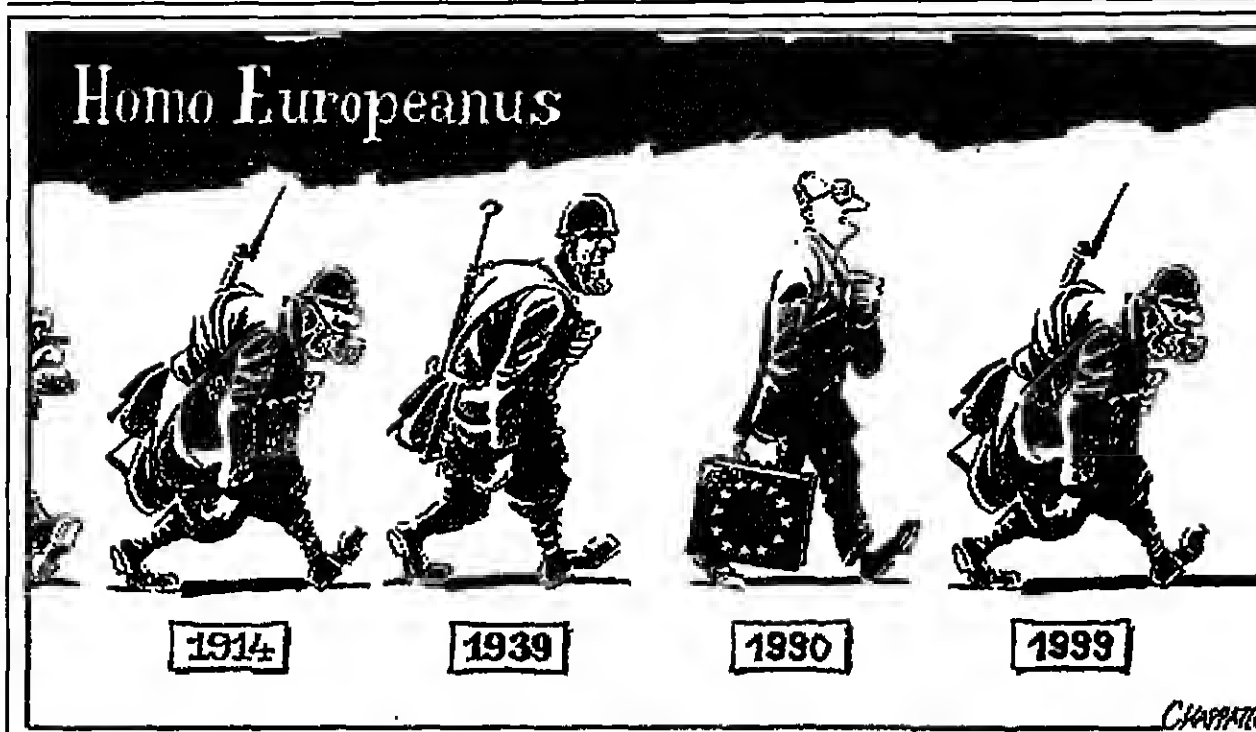
tional, economic, social, developmental, technological, commercial interchange and enterprises. Let the political leaders do what they have to do in their own narrow circles and allow the leaders in the other spheres to function.

As for the Arab citizens — the teachers, the writers, the journalists, the businessmen, the scientists, etc. — they need to cut down on the poetry and get down to the prose: the tangible projects, the workable ideas, the effective plans and schemes.

Ideally, of course, we want Arab leaders to lead in the desired direction, planning, initiating, spearheading, implementing, facilitating, and translating ideals into realities.

Arab countries need to open up more to each other, and to start building their ties on solid, concrete and tangible bases — not on rhetoric and poetry.

In this context, we in Jordan view His Majesty King Abdullah's recent trip to the Arab Gulf countries to be a significant step in pushing Arab-Arab relations in the direction we all desire and in setting an example (following the example of His Majesty King Hussein) in open, constructive, practical, pragmatic and unprejudiced politics.



Access to information is access to development

THE USE of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is fast becoming a major issue in the region. The debate in Amman last month on easy Internet access is a case in point, and many other places in the Middle East have also in the past few years had to start confronting the explosion in ICTs and what it means to the average person. Small but significant examples include the use of colour printing in Beirut newspapers (still not common), the spread of satellite dishes in Damascus (now ubiquitous, after a timid and illegal start in the early and mid-90s), Internet in Riyadh (OK today, but problematic and rare until recently), and cellular phones in Cairo (booming as of last year). The fax machine, once touted as having the ability to undermine the state and society in the Middle East, is now found in the grocery and nursery, not to mention the office; modems, virtually unknown five years ago, are today a part of daily life; and CD-ROMs are becoming as important to many as audio or video cassettes were two decades ago. This is not to ignore the low-tech end of the ICT spectrum: voice and speech communication techniques, theatre, and drama in education are also part of ICTs, if not as glitzy as some of the electronic gadgetry mentioned above.

Anyway, whether you're teaching in a primary school in rural Yemen or using state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment in Beirut, the whole range of ICTs — including new and traditional media and communications tools and approaches — can make a significant contribution as instruments and drivers of economic growth and positive change. While technologies alone cannot solve the problems of poverty and sustainable development, ICTs offer an enormous potential to generate, access, disseminate and share knowledge at all societal levels and thus bolster development at large.

However, there are also dangers, threats and obstacles that must be addressed: information flows and knowledge acquisition may be influenced or even impeded by power, institutions and peoples' interpretation of, and attitudes towards, information, its sources, and the transmitting medium. Exploring this complex issue is a vital part of the world dia-

logue that is being pushed by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP). The GKP is an informal grouping of organisations committed to sharing information, experiences and resources to promote, broad access to, and effective use of, knowledge and information as tools of sustainable, equitable development. This partnership currently numbers over forty world class bodies from the state, business, and civil sectors alike. The GKP includes financial institutions (e.g. the African Development Bank, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the World Bank), cultural organisations (the British Council, UNESCO, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), stalwarts of international business (PricewaterhouseCooper, Daimler-Benz Chrysler, Dell Computer), governments (Canada, Malaysia, and Switzerland), numerous U.N. organisations (FAO, WHO, ITU) and others operating nationally, within regions, and worldwide.

Hosted by the government of Malaysia, the GKP will be convening its second Global Knowledge conference (GKII) in Kuala Lumpur, March 7-10, 2000. The event will attract some 2,000 participants from around the world, representing industry and business, government, civil society, NGOs, and international and development organisations. The first GK conference, held in 1997, explored ways in which new ICTs are providing valuable possibilities for individuals, communities and states. However, this also poses special challenges for developing countries and the world's poor, and one of GKII's main themes will be access: assuring universal access to information and communications technologies and to the knowledge that can be tapped using these technologies.

GKII will thus focus on globalisation and its impact.

A key to sustainable development in the 21st century will be access to, use and sharing of knowledge, information, data, and communications channels as well as the requisite technological means. Those who do not have access to knowledge and the fruits of the technological and information revolution are in danger of becoming marginalised and part of an underclass, and such a phenomenon is starting to become apparent in the Middle

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

East. The challenge is therefore to enfranchise the poor and disadvantaged so that all are afforded access to information and learning.

GKP is inviting its partners and other actors to share their experiences at GKII. In particular, the partners will explore the impact of information and ICTs on public policy formulation at various levels as well as the significance of access to knowledge for particular cultures. The challenge for GKP at GKII will be to capture the diverse experiences of a wide range of development partners in a way that facilitates productive dialogue leading to effective action.

Regional events leading up to and involved with GKII will help to broaden participation and input and to sharpen the focus of the overall endeavour. For our part of the world, a linkup with the third Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF) is planned, as some of the meetings of MDFIII (in Cairo) and GKII are being held on the same dates. A relatively new ICT, video conferencing, will be used to hook up the conferences in Egypt with colleagues in Malaysia.

Ultimately, GKII — and its partners such as MDF — must focus on an agenda promoting the use of ICTs to further equity, fairness, social justice and intelligent and informed decision-making. Otherwise, a disastrous and paradoxical outcome of the current world explosion in ICTs will be to deprive people of information and to cut communications between groups, particularly the rich and the poor in the same cities or countries. This negative trend is already evident in parts of the Middle East and elsewhere. It will be one of the tasks of the GKP to reverse it.

Same end result

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

ISRAELI OFFICIALS and commentators are filling the media with their opinions as to whether the Kosovo situation is similar or not to that of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Most comments in this regard deal with 1948 and the expulsion of Palestinians, the Israeli denial to allow those refugees to return, and fears that Palestinian citizens of Israel in the Galilee area will demand in the future what the Kosovars are demanding now.

While there are many differences the current situation of Palestinians living in east Jerusalem has led many to claim that a bureaucratic form of ethnic cleansing is taking place by the Israelis. They refer to the Israeli policy of trying to reduce the number of Palestinians living in Jerusalem and increase the number of Jews. According to Palestinian lawyer Sani Khoury this policy escalated after the Oslo agreement when the issue of Jerusalem was agreed to be part of final status negotiations. "Since then the Israeli interior minister changed the regulations by denying residency rights to any Palestinian whose centre of life is not within the boundaries of Jerusalem." The difficulties of getting housing permits in Jerusalem for Palestinians and the deteriorating economic situation following the placement of the permanent checkpoints at all entrances of the city forced many Palestinians to leave the city looking for housing or work.

The policy of the interior ministry was not restricted to the issue of ID cards but also included an almost wholesale denial of family reunification applications. Throughout this process the Israeli high court has by and large refrained from objecting to the policies of the Interior Ministry. In one case the Israeli high court ruled that it is not a humanitarian need for a husband to live in the same house as his wife, and therefore there was no need to force the ministry of interior to automatically grant family reunification in such cases.

But despite its negative stand, Palestinians, who were able, felt there to be no other recourse than the supreme Israeli court. In many such cases the court remedied the situation but fell short of making a clear policy, thus only those who had the money were able to remedy their personal situation.

Khouri feels that the Israeli court is in collusion with the ministry of interior. "In every case that the court ruled in favour of the Palestinian plaintiffs, no punitive fees were imposed on the ministry of interior. Therefore the ministry kept carrying out its policy knowing full well that only

a few people who have the financial ability will appeal."

Khouri told me of the case of Adel Moughrabi a Palestinian who works as a librarian at the St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem yet has been denied along with his daughter family reunification and therefore medical insurance. "His case is air tight if he goes to the high court, but since he can't afford it, he will not be able to get residency or have his daughter treated as part of the health insurance guaranteed to all Jerusalem residents. There are many similar cases in which husbands and wives are caught in a catch 22. One is the case of George Abu Allis. His wife is an Israeli citizen and he is from Bethlehem. For three years they are stuck in limbo. They both must work in Jerusalem, she must live in Jerusalem for their application for residency to be looked into. But he is not permitted to live in Jerusalem.

Fifteen Palestinians and five human rights organisations have decided to try their luck one more time with the Israeli high court. Advocate Eliahu Abram from the Centre for the Defence of the Individual (Hamoked) told me that the case centres on the fact that the Israeli ministry of interior changed its policy without informing the public. The court will decide on April 22 whether to hear the case or not. Already the Israeli high court has allowed eight of the fifteen applicants to have their residency reinstated and their ID cards returned.

When I asked Eliahu Abram if he thought that this Israeli policy can be described as bureaucratic ethnic cleansing he responded that there are many differences and some similarities. "What is in common with Kosovo is that this is a policy against a certain ethnic group. Palestinians are denied residency and are deported while Jews are not. What is different is that there is no violence involved here."

While Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and Interior Minister Eliahu Suissa are no Slobodan Milosevic, one can't argue with the fact that in both cases the desired demographic result is not very much different.

'Collateral damage' lies dying in a shattered Belgrade hospital

By Robert Fisk

WHEN NATO attacked the Belgrade suburb of Banjica yesterday, its third bomb blasted shards of glass into Dragana Kristic's neck.

The target had been a barracks 50 metres away. So that obscene cliché "collateral damage" comes to mind — but for one thing, Dragana was lying in a hospital bed when she was wounded, recovering from a cancer operation that surgeons had performed only a few hours earlier. They had taken a four-and-a-half kilogramme tumour from her stomach.

With her neck and shoulder swaddled in bandages, she looked up at us yesterday from her bed, a pretty dark-haired woman of 23 who was as angry as she was in pain. "I don't know which hurts more — my stomach, my shoulder or my heart," she told us. "It was the third bomb that broke the window and did this to me."

She was not the only victim. On a lower floor, 74-year-old Radisav Milosavljevic — already suffering a serious heart complaint — lay curled up like a giant fetus, bandages covering half his head and face, his heart monitor racing on a small screen to the left of his bed.

The bombs had vibrated through the entire Military Medical Academy, shaking the bed of 14-year-old Ivan Labovic, critically wounded during a NATO bomb attack on Pristina on March 30 and now dying — heavily drugged but still conscious — in the intensive care unit. "He was wounded — near his home — in the back, the abdomen, stomach, liver and spleen," Dr. Nenad Markovic said. "He has had major surgery four times already but the wall of his stomach is missing. I don't think we can save him."

Six other patients lay beside Ivan, one of them a soldier, the rest civilians, all dying like the 14-year old, all in a coma, all on respirators. Two of them were brain-dead — most were

hit by falling masonry during air raids — and a young doctor was using a tube to suck saliva from the throat of a young man gravely wounded in the NATO bombing of Aleksinac 12 days ago. "He will die — I'm afraid they are all going to die," Markovic said. He walked over to where Ivan lay, scarred legs apart, under a mountain of sheets, 12 tubes winding into his nose, throat and stomach.

"Which football team do you support?" he asked the dying boy. "Partizans?" There was no movement from the child.

"Red Star?" And Ivan moved his eyes towards the doctor and then lowered them for a second. "You see?" Markovic said loudly, turning to us with a smile. "He supports Red Star."

But Red Star is sure to lose this supporter. "Their wounds are too terrible," the doctor said. "What can we do?"

The medical staff have hung a large red cross from the roof of their hospital and a smaller red cross flag to the side of the vast 18-year-old building. Half its 1,000 patients are civilians — non-military personnel can buy their way into the hospital's care with medical insurance — and the other half soldiers and members of army families.

But the medical centre is located in a suburb teeming with barracks buildings, parade grounds and army compounds. Most of them are deserted and NATO was evidently not aiming at the hospital. But it knew the risk it was taking when it bombed the army garages behind the hospital's teaching centre. And it wounded Dragana Kristic.

"The bombs were only 50 metres away: was that worth the risk to this hospital?" Markovic asked. A colleague, Dr. Radoslav Svecic, walked in from the broken glass door with a small piece of metal and put it in my hand. It was part of the fuse cap of a bomb, its jagged edges cling-



The damage at Belgrade's Military Medical Academy hospital yesterday after a nearby barracks was hit

ing to my fingers. "I just found this outside the door," he said.

Hundreds of windows lay in pieces around the hospital, millions of glass splinters, which staff were sweeping into silver, wintry piles around the hospital grounds with their blossoms and magnolia trees.

Markovic's question was a moral one. True, this hospital is a military institution with General Aco Jovicic as its head.

True, there are soldiers as well as civilians among the patients.

But wounded soldiers in field hospitals are supposed to be safe from

attack under the rules of war, as well as civilians.

What if the NATO bombs had devastated just a few metres, as they had at Aleksinac where 24 people are known to have been killed? Did Dragana Kristic and Radisav Milosavljevic have to be lacerated by glass in an attempt to destroy a row of empty barracks buildings?

With a communist's preference for rhetoric rather than argument — and an ability to destroy any arguments with exaggeration on an epic scale — General Jovicic loudly denounced the damage to his hospital as a "war

crime."

Yugoslavia, he told us, was fighting in "a dance against Satan" and "only the crimes of Genghis Khan" could compare to the NATO attacks on Serbia. The Americans were "psychopaths realising their frustrations in death and destruction all over the world." We wanted him to stop, to let facts speak for themselves, to end this genuinely angry but noisensical tirade.

Walking the wards of the Belgrade Military Medical Academy, I remembered another hospital I walked through seven years ago, in Sarajevo,

deliberately shelled for months by Bosnian Serb forces. And I thought of those thousands of Kosovo Albanians, dispossessed, in despair, who desperately need the care and compassion that these Serb doctors demonstrate each day in this Belgrade hospital. But victims cannot be balanced against each other.

NATO spokesman, Jamie Shea, says the alliance goes to "extraordinary lengths" to avoid civilian casualties. But this is totally untrue. On Monday, NATO planes destroyed a passenger train in south-eastern Serbia while bombing a bridge that it called "a military supply line." In other words, it was prepared to attack a railway track in mid-morning — in full knowledge that the railway carried scheduled passenger trains — to blow up a bridge. So much for Shea's "extraordinary lengths."

And the same applied in Banjica yesterday. NATO bombed a barracks and wounded hospital patients. By a terrible irony, we found Mira Drijaca waiting outside the medical centre to visit her wounded brother Mica. Mira is a paediatric doctor. Mica is a surgeon. And he was wounded while tending to patients at a clinic more than a week ago — in another NATO bombing attack, this time on a nearby military airport outside Kraljevo. He was brought to Belgrade with his legs covered in burns.

Mira carried a plastic bag of homemade cakes and Easter eggs for her brother. "He did nothing wrong to the pilot of the plane that wounded him," she said. "I don't think the pilot knows why he bombed. He was ordered to do it." As for her brother: "I tell him to endure."

In her bed, Dragana Kristic is less forgiving in her pain.

"If I met the pilot that did this," she said, touching the bandages at her neck. "I could only wish for his child to have a day like I had."

— The Independent

Melissa sparks marketing frenzy, but raises fears about Big Brother

By Dick Satran
Reuters

IN A short time, Melissa made a lot of enemies. More than two dozen companies offered products promising to "detect," "debug," "kill," "stop," or "correct" her.

"Aladdin secures the global village against the Melissa virus," announced one software company, while others offered to vaccinate, immunise and provide a wide range of medical cures for the trendy disease.

Melissa, in case you have been in a Montana cabin cut off from all forms of technology and media, is a computer virus — triggered by simply opening up e-mail attachments, which turn your innocent little PC into a virtual spam factory.

By the time it is over, you will have unwittingly sent e-mails to 50 of your closest friends giving them a list of pornography sites, and you will not even know what hit you.

But even as the companies were vowing to stop the dreaded Melissa, they were counting their good fortune that she arrived on the scene. With enemies like Melissa, who needs friends? "It's a great marketing opportunity for anti-virus companies," said Paul Saunders of Soundview Technology.

"Melissa heightened the awareness of why you need this kind of protection. It was a worldwide phenomenon. It was incredible the way it propagated itself."

For those in the business of protecting computer users from the perils of cyberspace, the virus sparked a marketing frenzy.

Cybersitter, which sells itself as a protector against online pornography, said it now blocks "Melissa and its offshoots, the Mad Cow or Papa viruses." Others launched similar new products or upgraded existing software right after the virus surfaced.

Melissa also gave a stage to the FBI's fledgling cybercrime unit, the National Infrastructure Protection Centre. The FBI had not had much success finding the perpetrators of previous viruses, but this one gave the bureau a PR coup. It got credit for quickly finding suspect David Smith and helping minimise damage by sounding the alarm even before the virus hit.

The FBI unit was formed a year ago to protect government and private-sector computers from attack after a series of hacker raids on Pentagon computers rang alarm bells in Washington but did not arouse much concern with the public.

Indeed, a hacker arrested last year

'Every little step you make is being recorded, on the web and in real life'

known as Analyser, an Israeli teen named Ehud Tenebaum, drew praise from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for being "damn good" but "dangerous" after he broke into U.S. defence computers.

Analyser gained something of a Robin Hood reputation and although he was eventually indicted for his raids he has yet to serve any jail time.

Do not expect the same kid-glove treatment for Melissa's creator, especially with the virus causing such widespread disruption and inconvenience. This was not just a few Pentagon machines getting pinged but "virtually everyone," in some way, according to a spokesman for security firm Network Associates.

The FBI unit gave grim warnings about the "utmost seriousness" of the case and said the virus could cause "significant network degradation and e-mail outages." Privacy advocate Deirdre Mulligan of the Centre for Democracy and Technology mused before the arrest that, "whoever catches the virus creator will be a real hero." Richard Smith of Phar Lap Software Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as much as anyone, gets that credit. He tracked Internet sites and came up with some key leads in the case. But he himself worries that there is too much surveillance.

"Every little step you make is being recorded, on the web and in real life. If there is a crime being committed you can always go back and look at the stuff," he said.

That is what happened with Melissa. The suspect left a number of "digital fingerprints," and a probe by the FBI, New Jersey police and computer virus experts found its target.

The case showed clearly that technology exists to find people in cyberspace, but it also raises questions about Big Brother watching computer users. Privacy advocate Mulligan says the much-publicised

virus could prompt demands for new measures that might limit privacy for all computer users. "Some people are doing bad things so the call goes out to track everybody." The two giants of the personal computer world, Microsoft and Intel, both had plans that, to effect, "tracked everyone" with universal ids. In Intel's case, it was a processor serial number or PSN. Intel dropped plans to embed the number in its computer chips after privacy groups launched a boycott of its products. The PSN now must be turned on by users to work.

Microsoft also sparked controversy when it was learned that it has routinely stamped its software with a fingerprint called the Global Unique Identifier. The company said it was not collecting user data on the ids and has created a patch to disable its use in identifying specific machines.

Those plans were blasted by privacy advocates because of the broadness and pervasiveness of the tracking systems. "Do we develop a massive system of surveillance because there are known criminals? Not in this country," Mulligan said.

'You'll have as much privacy as you can afford'

But what about lesser privacy invasions, the millions of transactions taking place each day and the tonnes of data being collected routinely on every consumer? The answer will likely come from the marketplace.

Just as companies flooded the market with Melissa-killing software, they will offer consumers who want privacy a growing number of products. Wired Magazine executive editor Kevin Kelly told a University of California Journalism School conference.

"You'll have as much privacy as you can afford," he predicted.

IBM offered a market-based response by declaring it would withhold advertising from any web sites that did not clearly post their privacy rules for consumers. That won approval from privacy advocates and also helped bolster its marketing efforts, showing "big blue" is more in touch with web-savvy consumers than some of its competitors.

New directions

By Jean-Claude Elias

THE NEVER-ending race for more powerful, faster computers, has been recently redefined to suit two highly popular applications: the Internet and multimedia. Actually both fields are closely linked, for a good number of web sites now provide live, high quality sound and images — both stills and motion.

The first booster comes in the form of the ISDN telephone lines, just introduced in Jordan. Simply, the ISDN provides about 5 times the speed of the more traditional analogue system, with increased reliability.

Using ISDN, however, requires a special telephone subscription and the addition of some hardware to your computer. Whether the additional expense is justified or not depends on how important Internet speed is for you. But even with ISDN, you will not

always connect at the highest possible speed. Indeed, the bottleneck often is the server or the site you contact. If this site is busy or accessed by a large number of "visitors" you still have to be patient. Back to the old analogy — how fast can you drive a Ferrari in downtown Amman? On the processor side, both Intel and AMD, the main manufacturers of microprocessors for PCs have concentrated their efforts to design and produce chips that perform better with multimedia applications. The new Pentium III by Intel and the K6-3 by AMD feature additional instructions specifically aimed to boost multimedia performance. This year AMD seems in a good position to compete with Intel, particularly concerning three-dimensional images and graphics. AMD has recognised the importance of this market and may be rewarded when it releases the new K7 CPU. For those who love num-

bers, the K7 processor will start at 500 MHz and may reach a stunning 1 GHz by the end of year.

The combination of ISDN telephone link and ultra-fast processors will not only benefit those interested in Internet. There is a growing trend to connect computers between the office and the home, via dial-up connection, independently of any network. Let your office PC dial your home PC and get the file that you forgot to bring with you this morning. Or keep confidential data at home and access it from your office any time you need to. Speed opens new horizons. Again, you'd hardly consider doing Amman-Paris with a bicycle, but with a eight-cylinder limo...

Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaudio@nets.com.jo

chip talk



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performed at The Irish Village - Dubai

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مكتبة العصر

Prince Hassan stresses humanitarian dimension in economic cooperation within globalisation framework

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Hassan Ben Talal on Wednesday opened a seminar entitled: Pan Arab Economic Cooperation — National Versus Global Approach, by stressing the need to be focus on the humanitarian dimension in the national and regional economic endeavours.

"It is very important for countries in the Third World to give due attention to the humanitarian dimension while seeking to bolster economic cooperation within the globalisation framework," said Prince Hassan at the opening session held at the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation.

"The problem does not lie in globalisation itself but rather in managing it," said Prince Hassan cautioning that it will be difficult to manage the economy within a globalisation system without shifting attention from the national concept to regional cooperation and noting that no sound economy can exist in the absence of database and free exchange of information.

In his address at the meeting, organised in cooperation with the Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) and attended by experts from the Arab World, Prince Hassan said: "The absence of a database

means no progress can be achieved beyond the point of hopes and slogans that remind us of the challenges that faced us at the 1980 Amman Arab Economic Summit."

Prince Hassan said centres where political dialogue can be conducted should be encouraged and their work should focus on substance rather than on persons. He urged the delegates to finalise practical recommendations and programmes that can be put into practice.

JBA Chairman Hamdi Tabbaa said the seminar will tackle among other things the effects of economic globalisation on

inter-Arab economic cooperation.

In economic relations, Jordan gives priority to the Arab countries and 50 per cent of the Kingdom's trade is conducted with Arab states, according to Tabbaa. He said that despite the Kingdom's meagre resources it is employing more than half a million workers from the Arab World.

But he added that trade relations among Arab states are still limited and economic integration is still out of reach, stressing the need for the creation of an economic bloc capable of competing in world trade.

Palestinians publish first national accounts figures

RAMALLAH (R) — The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on Wednesday published for the first time national accounts figures, reporting a current account deficit of \$754.6 million for 1997.

Fouad Bseiso, governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA), which prepared the figures, said the 1997 trade deficit was \$1.8 billion, most of it attributed to imports which reached \$2.3 billion. He said 1998 figures were being prepared.

"More than 85 per cent of [the trade deficit]... is a result of [the Israeli] occupation which made our economy totally dependent on Israel," Bseiso told a news conference. He also said a 1994 economic protocol the PNA signed with Israel "dictates we import mainly from Israel." "If this trend continues, our economy will continue to suffer tremendously," Bseiso added.

A PMA official told Reuters the \$1.8 billion trade deficit constituted 19 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Bseiso said contributions paid to the PNA by international donor states to help rebuild the Palestinian economy after the Oslo accord of 1993 Israel and PLO was signed amounted to \$129.1 million.

Remittances from tens of thousands of Palestinians working in Israel and others working abroad reached \$230.7 million.

"Most of the remittances comes from workers in Israel. But this is a negative aspect because it's unstable since it depends on Israeli policies, and Israel imposes closures which deprive workers of their incomes and jobs," Bseiso said.

Israel has frequently restricted the movement of goods and people from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, citing security considerations.

Bseiso said private sector foreign investment in 1997 amounted to \$109.7 million, and the capital and financial account showed a \$570.1 million surplus. Funds from international donors for development projects amounted to \$306.3 million.

He said that the errors and omissions were around \$258 million. That equaled more than six per cent of GDP but that it was down by 41 per cent from 1996.

China's premier urges U.S. not to worry about trade deficit

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts (R) — Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji told Americans not to worry about the trade deficit with his country in a policy address at MIT on Wednesday.

"Don't make such a big deal out of this trade deficit," Zhu told the crowded Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) auditorium.

He said the United States gauged the deficit at \$56.9 billion while China placed it at \$21.1 billion, and an academic study put it nearer to \$36 billion.

"China exports on the whole are labour-intensive goods with low value added... You stopped producing these long ago," he said.

Zhu, a graduate of Qinghua University, which he called "China's MIT," cited as an example the production of Nike and Reebok footwear in China.

He said Chinese workers were getting paid \$2 to produce shoes that sold for \$120 in the United States. But the \$2 was worthwhile and the arrangement was "beneficial to China because it provided jobs."

But he called on Washington to remove more trade restrictions with China, especially in the area of technology, saying that to do so would create a market worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

Referring to the one trade agreement reached on this trip, that lifted restrictions on U.S. exports of farm products, Zhu remarked, "Ladies and gentlemen, can the Chinese people live on citrus and wheat? Yes, we can, but we want to live better."

Euro zone has trade surplus of 83.2b euros in 1998

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The 11 countries of the euro zone had a trade surplus of 83.2 billion euros (\$90.0 billion) in trade with the rest of the world in 1998, revised figures from the EU statistics office Eurostat have showed.

The surplus was 5.2 billion euros less than a surplus in 1997.

The 15 countries of the European Union (EU) had a trade surplus of 20.3 billion euros in 1998 or 28.2 billion euros less than the surplus in 1997.

Trade by the 15 countries with the United States grew by 13 per cent in terms of EU exports and by nine per cent in terms of imports by the EU.

Exports to Japan fell by 13 per cent but exports to China rose by five per cent and imports by 12 per cent.

Trade with leading countries in central Europe grew strongly but trade with Russia fell.

In the EU, Germany had the biggest trade surplus of 69.1 billion euros and Britain had the biggest deficit of 41.2 billion euros.

Ireland achieved the biggest increase. Its surplus of 20.4 billion euros ranked third among EU countries after Germany and Italy.

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 14-04-99									
CURRENCY	JORDAN DINAR	SAUDI RYAL	U.A.E. DIRHAM	BAHRAIN DINAR	OMAN RYAL	QATAR RYAL	KUWAIT DINAR	EGYPT POUND	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1928	0.1875	0.1875	0.1845	0.2572	0.2214	0.7050
SAUDI RYAL	5.2913	1.0000	1.0211	0.9432	0.9432	0.9301	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
U.A.E. DIRHAM	5.1879	0.9793	1.0000	0.9432	0.9432	0.9301	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
BAHRAIN DINAR	0.5325	0.1005	0.1025	1.0000	1.0000	0.9701	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
OMAN RYAL	0.5325	0.1005	0.1025	1.0000	1.0000	0.9701	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
QATAR RYAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9913	0.9432	0.9432	0.9301	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4367	0.0824	0.0842	0.0842	0.0842	0.0824	1.0000	0.8696	2.8762
EGYPT POUND	4.8227	0.9104	0.9396	0.9571	0.9571	0.9278	0.7875	1.0000	3.2736
LEBANON LIRA	21.7147	4.0048	4.0553	39.6453	39.6453	4.0000	45.7500	4.0000	140.7600
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2656	0.2703	0.2656	0.2656	0.2600	0.3675	0.3136	1.0000
GB POUND STERLING	0.8721	0.1546	0.1581	0.1546	0.1546	0.1500	0.2062	0.1781	0.7050
GERMANY MARK	2.5549	0.4833	0.4925	0.4797	0.4797	0.4652	0.5375	0.4717	1.7558
SWITZERLAND FRA	2.0958	0.3858	0.4042	0.3927	0.3927	0.3801	0.4375	0.3917	1.3750
FRANCE FRANC	6.5534	1.1815	1.2115	1.1612	1.1612	1.1301	1.2500	1.0664	3.7576
JAPAN YEN	1.6840	0.3119	0.3246	0.3119	0.3119	0.3001	0.3750	0.3217	1.0000
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.8195	0.5434	0.5549	0.5434	0.5434	0.5251	0.5937	0.5175	1.9360
ITALY LIRA	11.6794	2.2048	2.2519	2.1937	2.1937	2.1401	2.3750	2.0417	7.3650
SPAIN PESA	25.2831	4.7747	4.8754	4.7747	4.7747	4.6001	5.0000	4.3750	15.6375
SWITZERLAND FRA	52.5953	9.9477	10.1576	9.9477	9.9477	9.6001	10.6250	9.3750	33.7500
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	2.2057	0.4171	0.4259	0.4171	0.4171	0.4001	0.4375	0.3917	1.3750
CYPRUS POUND	2.5256	0.8008	0.8178	0.8008	0.8008	0.7751	0.8437	0.7500	2.6250
JAPAN YEN	119.2300	193.0936	65.9130	60.3186	15.6542	1.0000	58.9034	50.9154	179.9462
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0380	3.3005	1.1267	1.3729	2.7550	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	3.7576
SWEDEN KRONA	8.2890	13.3916	4.5712	5.5707	1.1691	0.5000	1.0000	1.0000	13.7500
ITALY LIRA	17.9075	28.0012	8.9897	12.0630	2.9619	16.0000	12.0000	12.0000	62.5000
GERMANY MARK	37.3030	60.4219	20.6262	25.1324	6.1521	11.2994	12.0000	12.0000	62.5000
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	1.5645	2.5336	0.8649	1.0539	0.2575	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	3.7576
CYPRUS POUND	0.5300	0.8543	0.2932	0.3570	0.2374	0.5000	1.0000	1.0000	3.7576
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.7255	20.6289	7.0349	8.5722	2.2977	10.6131	6.2444	1.0000	12.7255
CANADA DOLLAR	1.4907	2.4142	0.8241	1.0042	0.2457	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	3.7576
EURO	0.6743	1.4869	0.5110	0.6226	0.1574	0.2500	0.3750	0.3136	1.0000

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR									
CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMANY MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND GUILDER	ITALY LIRA	EURO	
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6195	0.5528	0.7336	1.4527	1.7558	7.3650	1.3750	
GB POUND STERLING	0.6175	1.0000	0.3414	0.4159	0.7116	0.8696	3.2736	0.7050	
GERMANY MARK	1.5888	2.5295	1.0000	1.2155	0.2952	0.4375	1.7558	1.3750	
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.4845	2.5041	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	0.5000	
FRANCE FRANC	5.0954	9.8245	3.3336	4.0656	1.0000	0.5000	3.7576	3.7576	
JAPAN YEN	119.2300	193.0936	65.9130	60.3186	15.6542	1.0000	58.9034	50.9154	
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.0380	3.3005	1.1267	1.3729	2.7550	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
SWEDEN KRONA	8.2890	13.3916	4.5712	5.5707	1.1691	0.5000	1.0000	1.0000	
ITALY LIRA	17.9075	28.0012	8.9897	12.0630	2.9619	16.0000	12.0000	12.0000	
GERMANY MARK	37.3030	60.4219	20.6262	25.1324	6.1521	11.2994	12.0000	12.0000	
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	1.5645	2.5336	0.8649	1.0539	0.2575	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
CYPRUS POUND	0.5300	0.8543	0.2932	0.3570	0.2374	0.5000	1.0000	1.0000	
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.7255	20.6289	7.0349	8.5722	2.2977	10.6131	6.2444	1.0000	
CANADA DOLLAR	1.4907	2.4142	0.8241	1.0042	0.2457	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	
EURO	0.6743	1.4869	0.5110	0.6226	0.1574	0.2500	0.3750	0.3136	

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN									
NOTE: THE DATA ACCESS FOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES									
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES									
CURRENCY	1M	3M	6M	1YEAR	2YEAR	3YEAR	4YEAR	5YEAR	
US DOLLAR	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	5.0000	
GB POUND STERLING	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	5.5000	
GERMANY MARK	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
FRANCE FRANC	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
JAPAN YEN	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
HOLLAND GUILDER	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
ITALY LIRA	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	
EURO	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	3.5000	

WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	METAL	ASK	BID	
FRANKFURT	DAX	5199.18	5159.16	-40.02	GOLD	233.12	234.11		
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	11899.69	11794.10	-104.41	SILVER	4.93	4.91		
NEW YORK	DJ INDICES	10396.01	10399.51	3.50	PLATINUM	356.50	357.50		
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	631.67	633.12	1.45					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	727.49	728.32	0.83					
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1349.22	1352.62	3.40					
TOKYO	NIKKEI 225	16744.59	16715.16	-29.43					
PARIS	CAC 40	4367.41	4353.20	-14.21					

World Bank says bad banks slowing growth in Bangladesh

DHAKA (AFP) — Bangladesh's weak banking sector is a major drag on economic growth, the World Bank warns in a report.

"The financial sector continues to be underdeveloped and inefficient, and poor financial intermediation presents a significant disincentive to faster economic growth," the bank said in a aide memoire to the April 19-20 meeting of Bangladesh's major donors in Paris.

It said banks were allowed to operate even though most of them suffer from a serious

capital deficiency, which stood at \$2 billion in June 1997.

"The Bangladesh Bank remains a weak central bank with its functions and responsibilities not clearly defined... no punitive measures are taken against banks that fail to implement agreed corrective measures," the World Bank said.

It added the central bank lacked autonomy in core areas like licensing of new banks, monetary and exchange rate policies and the supervision of state-run

banks. "The most fundamental problem is a legal system that allows defaulters to delay cases indefinitely."

Prudential regulations were very lax in Bangladesh and the auditing and accounting standards were "extremely loose," the bank said, adding that the lack of enforcement of regulations was making the situation worse.

According to the World Bank's latest estimate last year, 50 per cent of all bank loans were classified as bad, doubtful or sub-standard.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Gossips
- Flooded
- Greening of
- "The Simpsons"
- Unemployed
- Park, NJ
- Swear
- Excessively acid
- Poolside area
- Anderson of "WKRP in Cincinnati"
- Kilmer poem
- Mars
- Rap sessions?
- Powell's co-star
- Myra
- "Hud" co-star
- Patricia
- Easily rattled
- Work unit
- British chap
- Relative by marriage
- "Jabberwocky," e.g.
- Mr. T's outfit
- Identical
- Iran's religion
- Ocean motions
- Elevator cage
- Skillet material
- Shallow notch
- Geller's box
- Public transport
- Allen's permission to work
- Actress
- Verdugo
- Leo's bellow
- Contemptible
- cats
- Young guys
- Otherwise
- Beginning
- Part of the eye
- Garden invader
- Prepared
- Small whirlpool

DOWN

- Essences
- Show devotion
- Precision fliers
- Cool as a cucumber
- Electric mees
- Dresses in
- Pot starter
- Lost traction
- To-do
- Kuala Lumpur populace
- Stratford's river
- Color variation
- Foolish individual
- Sign of healing
- Mischief
- Norse god
- Scatter
- Fitzgerald
- Quantity of yarn
- Main part of a bust
- Pirate Edward
- Teach
- Himalayan monk
- Water pitcher
- Classic saga
- Orla Ponselle
- not
- Bismarck
- Was crucial
- Program choices
- Demeanor
- Plat division
- Church of
- England priest
- Highland breed
- Said further
- Disoriented
- Impudently bold
- Cultivated
- Actor's part
- Loosen up
- First-rate
- Tabula
- Barrymore structure

By Diane C. Baldwin
Columbia, MD

LOVE STRUM PLOT
TRAN LIAAN REDO
RAND EATIN EDEN
ALL CARAVANARY
TAZZA SIT
WAYLAY DISCOVER
INFOR SETAE AXE
SKAT MOLES INCA
ELI SALEM MOOEL
ORANGEOR ROWELS
BUN SOLAR
EVANGELICAL BAT
PIPE TACOS MINA
EVER INERT ELAL
EARS CEDES ETTE

Peanuts



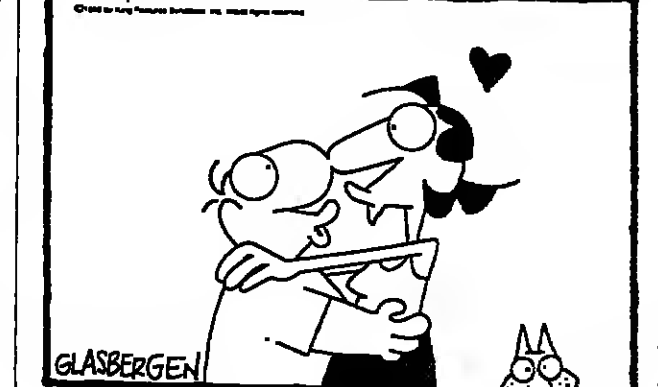
Zits



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



JUMBLE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Sales tax accounts for 54 per cent of gross customs duties collected in '98

THE DEPARTMENT of Customs collected around JD718.1 million in revenue last year and, as such, accounted for 41 per cent of the gross local revenue or 36 per cent of the gross general revenue, the department's 1998 annual report showed. The revenue in 1997 amounted to around JD678 million.

The annual report said customs duties amounted to JD646.9 million during 1998, 6.1 per cent higher than the JD609.6 million collected in 1997. The increase, the department said was due to a rise in the sales tax by JD33.7 million or an average of 10.6 per cent.

The customs duties comprised customs fees totalling JD289.9 million, sales tax amounting to JD351.1 million and JD5.8 million in fines. The customs fees totalling JD287.7 million in 1997. The government estimated customs fees at JD277 million in its 1998 budget but the actual amount collected was higher by JD12.9 million or 4.7 per cent. Customs fees are estimated to be JD297 million this year.

The revenue from the sales tax went up by an average 10.6 per cent from JD317.4 million in 1997 to JD351.1 million in 1998.

Proceeds from sales tax on imported goods amounted to JD187.1 million and on "specific local goods" amounted to JD140 million. JD16 million were collected from the ad-valorem sales tax which is a tax levied as a fixed percentage of an item's value and JD8 million from sales tax on services.

The sales tax accounted for 54 per cent of the gross customs duties or 49 per cent of the gross customs collections. The percentage of the sales tax to the total local revenues was put at 21 per cent and to the general revenues at 20 per cent. The Customs Department expects to collect JD362 million in sales tax during 1999.

The report showed the amounts collected from customs fines and deposits totalling JD5.8 million and JD42.3 million respectively. Customs fines were 28.9 per cent higher than the JD4.5 million collected in 1997 while customs deposits were only 2.2 per cent higher than the JD4.1 million total in 1997. "Fees of other departments" rose 6.6 per cent from JD27.2 million in 1997 to JD29 million in 1998 (Al Aswaq + Al Dastour).

Net investments by non-Jordanians total JD12.7m at stock exchange during three months

THE NET investments of non-Jordanians in the Amman Stock Exchange amounted to JD12.7 million during the first three months of this year, said Jalil Tarif, the executive director of the stock exchange. He explained that non-Jordanians bought shares valued at JD40.3 million during the period covered but also sold shares valued at JD27.6 million during the same period.

Arab investors' purchases amounted to

about JD6.1 million or 15.1 per cent of the volume purchased by non-Jordanians. Purchase of non-Arabs amounted to JD34.2 million or 84.9 per cent of the total investments taken by non-Jordanians. On the selling side, Arab investors sold shares worth JD13.7 million (49.6 per cent) during the first three months of this year whereas sales by non-Arabs amounted to JD13.9 million (50.4 per cent) (Al Aswaq + Al Ra'i + Al Dastour).

Falling Arab Bank share price pulls down general price index to 174.7 points

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — The Amman Stock Exchange's general price index fell 1.35 per cent Wednesday as a result of a sharp decline in the share price of the Arab Bank, the bourse's major blue-chip, brokers said Wednesday.

The stock market's general price index closed at 173.41 points compared to 175.59 at the end of last week and 174.7 points on Tuesday.

Amer Muasher, a broker at the stock market, said the bourse was affected by the

decline in the Arab Bank's share price, which lost JD5 in Wednesday's trading.

On Wednesday, the bank's share price closed at JD202. Muasher indicated that the decline in the bank's share price was due to the "selling pressure" by investors, especially foreigners, who resorted to sell some of their equities in the Arab Bank.

"Investors rushed to sell some of their equities in other firms as a result of what happened to the Arab Bank share prices," the broker told the Jordan Times. The broker said the drop

in the Arab Bank share prices followed the distribution of dividends to the shareholders.

Last month, the Arab Bank's general assembly approved the distribution of dividends at a rate of 30 per cent or JD3 per share. The total amount that was distributed among shareholders amounted to JD26.4 million.

Naim Naqeb, another broker, expected Arab Bank share prices to break the "JD200 barrier" in the coming few days. "Taking in consideration

the continuous decline of the Arab Bank share prices, it is likely that its share prices will record more declines next week," Naqeb added.

"If such a thing occurs, the price will be more attractive to the investors who will resort to buy the bank's shares, which, subsequently, will lead to an increase in its prices," the broker added.

Naqeb said that with the "absence" of the institution-

al buying and foreign pressure to sell more shares in the stock market, "prices are expected to record more declines."

The bourse daily bulletin showed that trading at the stock exchange amounted to JD751,983 compared to JD1.2 million on Tuesday.

The bulletin indicated that banking and industrial sectors recorded decrease in their share price index, 1.88 and 0.39 respectively.

Eisenberg family sells business holdings in Israel

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Eisenberg family sold most of its vast business holdings in Israel on Wednesday to an Israeli investment firm for \$330 million, the item news agency reported.

Erwin Eisenberg, who has been managing the family empire since the death of his father Saul two years ago, signed a deal selling the family's 53 per cent share in the Israel Corporation holding company to Ofer Brothers Investment, item said. Established 30 years

ago by Saul, Israel Corp has an annual turnover of \$6 billion and notably controls Israel Chemicals (ICL), which has a monopoly on potash mining in the Dead Sea.

Israel Corp. also holds 49 per cent of the shipping firm Zim and 26 per cent of an oil refinery company.

Erwin Eisenberg initially negotiated to sell Israel Corp to Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, but the deal ran into opposition from the government,

which did not want to see the country's main mineral resource fall into foreign hands.

The Eisenbergs decided to sell off their holdings to resolve a bitter family dispute over Saul Eisenberg's will.

The will left virtually the entire family fortune to Erwin but was disputed by the late tycoon's widow and daughters.

The two sides eventually agreed in court to a compromise split of the estate.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may feel your power waning as the sun begins to go from your sign into Taurus, but that's OK. By now, you should have acquired pretty much everything you need. You've got new status, new responsibilities, and perhaps quite a bit of new wisdom. Use it to keep yourself from wasting lots of time and energy on an unnecessary trip across town.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your money may be in jeopardy today, so keep a close eye on it. Looks like there could be a leak that you don't even know about. It might be something like a fee, or a tax, that's higher than you expected. There may be a way around this next year. Looks like it's a little too late now. The good news is that you may qualify for a raise in pay. Ask a person who would know about that.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The sun is in Aries. The moon's in your sign today, enhancing all your natural charm. Not the least of these is your fabulous attitude. Even when you're down, you can manage to cheer other people, and they definitely appreciate it. Offer encouragement to a person who's stuck. You might also point out a way around the problem.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) A friend seems to be having problems, but you can help. If you get inside information, however, remember to keep it in confidence. It's important that this secret not get spread around, so whatever you learn, keep to yourself. Let your friend know you're going to do that, too. That will open up the space for the other person to confide in you, which will be very helpful.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You're looking good, but don't rest on your laurels. Your window of opportunity may slam shut pretty soon, and you'll find you have to work a lot harder to get the same results. Today, for example, a long-distance contact could be fruitful. You'll get what you need with little more than a phone call. But if you wait until tomorrow, it won't be anywhere near that easy.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) The pressure you've been under is starting to ease. You've had more than enough stress to last you for quite a while. Now, the sun's getting ready to go into Taurus, and that will make your whole life easier. It might even make it possible for you to take a vacation. Your travel conditions get better, starting tomorrow.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Looks like all sorts of fun, and you're right in the middle of it. You get to organize the party, or set up the rendezvous, or somehow bring them all together. Without you, the different factions can't really figure out how to proceed. You're great at this, but take care. You might make yourself indispensable.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) It looks like there could be information leaks today. This is good, because you can collect data that was previously unavailable. If you've got any tough questions, ask them again. It could also be bad, however. If you're not careful you may say more than you meant to. You're usually pretty good at keeping a secret, but today it'll be tough, even for you!

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Odds are you'll get into a debate today, possibly with one you love. You don't want to argue, but obviously this person needs a little straightening out. The feeling is mutual. Instead of telling your side of it again, listen. You may be surprised to find that the other person already knows what you were going to say. To reach accord, toss out the script and come up with something new.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Focus on your paperwork. Don't try to avoid it. It'll be a lot more fun if you just get it done. Besides, it looks like you'll be nicely rewarded. Looks like there may be a rebate or a coupon lurking under that stack of papers you've let pile up. Think of this chore not as drudgery, but as a treasure hunt. No telling what you might find it there!

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Someone in a position of authority could be rather hard to deal with. That person wants all your attention. Don't let personal matters interfere. No private calls on company time, OK? Romance may flourish today, but if it does, it's because you've scheduled it for the right time and place.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) There's been a bit of a conflict between your work and your family responsibilities. You'd probably just as soon go with the family and let the work take care of itself. But wait, don't quit your job! New technology might provide an option that didn't exist before. In other words, perhaps you can have it all. Do a little studying and see what you can come up with.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The sun's going into Taurus today, in your solar second house of money and other valuables. That means for the next few weeks you'll be focusing on making more, and spending what you have more wisely. The moon in Cancer today helps. You can save on household items and food, and that will help stretch farther.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's going into your sign, which makes everything turn out better. For the next month or so, all your natural talents will be enhanced. You'll be confident, determined, and good looking. What more could you ask for? Well, today you could ask for being a little more eloquent in a test situation. If you can't find the right words, use silence instead.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's transit into Taurus puts you kind of up against it. That's the last sign before the sun goes into Gemini, so during this phase, you can go through it. Sort what's valuable from what's not and get ready to launch a few new programs.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You should be feeling a little stronger today. Several changes are taking place, and they're all good for you. Wait until you feel that little bit of extra confidence set in before you make your move. You've got the right idea, but it requires action. And once you're committed, you can't turn back, so choose carefully.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's about to begin its transit through Taurus, in your solar tenth house. That's the house of career and success, and with Taurus there, you'll get all sorts of new opportunities during the next few weeks. But there's always catch. In this case, there will be an exam, a tough one. You're going to have to prove you can do what needs to be done if you want to take the next step up.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) The sun's going into Taurus, and the moon is in Cancer. You may not be sure whether you're coming or going today, and that could be a problem. You'd like to be well organized, but heck, you've got so much to do right now it's hard to put it all in place. Don't stress out about it, because it doesn't really matter. Figure out the money most important thing to do and get that finished; the other stuff will sort itself out.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's going into Taurus today, which makes things a little more difficult. It means you'll have to start getting more practical, so although you've had a bunch of great ideas lately, you may not know quite how to make them happen. During the next few weeks, that's your big assignment. And don't worry. You don't have to do this all by yourself. Definitely get a Taurus to help you.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The sun's going into Taurus, and the moon is in Cancer. If you could be patient just a little while longer, you'll see that conditions are shifting in your favour. It might not seem that way at first, but that's just because there are changes underway. The sun is going into Taurus, however, in direct opposition to your sun in Scorpio, so there will be confrontations to deal with. But they will all be good for you, so don't worry about it. **SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's going into Taurus today, in your solar sixth house of work. For the next few weeks, your work is going to be intense. The good news is that it should also be steady, predictable and occasionally fun. But you won't get to run off and do whatever you want. That's OK. You might be able to acquire a bit of a nest egg.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) The sun's going into Taurus today, and that's fabulous for you. It means for the next four weeks, the sun is right there in your solar fifth house of romance, love and children. It doesn't get much better than this. The whole month should be marvellous. Today, with the moon in Cancer, the theme is partnership, so be bold. Tell your partner how much you appreciate him or her.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) The moon is in Cancer. The sun's going into Taurus, right into your solar fourth house of home and family. It's a great time to buy real estate, for example, or fix your place up. It's also a good phase for conversations with loved ones, getting old problems settled and making decisions. Today, the decision you need to make concerns your job.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) The sun's going into Taurus today, and this is good for you. Taurus is in your third house of education, so during the next few weeks you'll find it easier than usual to learn. Taurus helps you concentrate on one subject at a time. If you're like most Pisceans, you tend to get scattered. But when you can concentrate, Pisces is also the sign of the genius.

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INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.370	1.360	-0.73%
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JO. KUWAIT BK	1.600	1.600	0.00%
JO. GULF BK	0.620	0.630	+1.61%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.600	1.580	-1.25%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.510	0.510	0.00%
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JO. FRENCH INS	2.400	2.360	-1.67%
INSURANCE INDEX	122.250		-0.20%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.630	1.640	+0.61%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	1.000	0.950	-5.00%
JO. INT'L TRADING CENT	0.270	0.260	-3.70%
AL-RAY	7.500	7.600	+1.33%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.930	0.940	+1.08%
ARAB INT'L FOR INVS. & EDU	1.600	1.580	-1.25%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.110	1.140	+2.70%
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WORSTED MILLS	5.300	5.150	-2.83%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.940	2.920	-0.68%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.310	1.300	-0.76%
PAPER & CARDBOARD	1.300	1.280	-1.54%
NTL STEEL	0.770	0.770	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	6.090	6.070	-0.33%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.690	0.690	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.990	0.990	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.780	1.800	+1.12%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.380	0.380	0.00%
PETRO CHEMICAL	0.210	0.200	-4.76%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.120	1.120	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.940	0.920	-2.13%
NTL CABLE	0.500	0.500	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM	1.230	1.210	-1.63%
KAUFBERG	0.580	0.570	-1.72%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.990	0.970	-2.01%
FOOD FACTORIES	1.000	1.000	0.00%
NEW CAPLES	0.640	0.640	0.00%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.780	0.740	-5.13%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.620		-0.39%
PARALLEL			
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.470	0.490	+4.26%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.820	0.820	0.00%
AL - EKAL	0.810	0.770	-4.94%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.820	0.810	-1.92%
AMMAN INS	0.810	0.850	+4.94%
AL DAWJAH	0.880	0.870	-1.14%
ARAB INVESTORIES	0.580	0.570	-1.72%
MIDDLE EAST DEV	0.430	0.450	+4.65%
ARAB INT'L TRADE	0.180	0.180	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.330	0.330	0.00%
CENTURY	1.180	1.120	-5.08%
RAMCO	0.180	0.150	-16.25%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.380	0.370	-2.63%
AL-RAZI	0.590	0.570	-3.39%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.200	0.190	-5.00%
NTL POULTRY	0.650	0.650	0.00%
INTL DAR	0.800	0.780	-2.50%

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W. Asian Basketball Championship Orthodoxi one match away from Asian Clubs Championship

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's basketball champions Al Orthodoxi are one match away from capturing the 2nd West Asian Basketball Championship title which qualifies them to the Asian Clubs Championship which will be held in Beirut May 22-29.

They will, however, have to beat Palestine's Al Quds in Thursday night's match before they begin celebrations.

The West Asian Championship was due to have brought together 7 teams. However, Al Orthodoxi lost its serious rivals when title favourites, Lebanese champions Al Hikma, pulled out of the event and were followed by Iran's Baykan and Syria's Al Wihdeh.

Even Yemeni champions Al Mina' withdrew one day before the competition leaving only three teams fighting for the sole qualifying berth to the finals.

Al Orthodoxi beat Iraq's Air Defence

team 100-73. The Iraqi team went on to beat Palestinian team 87-71.

Al Hikma, Arab champions for the last two years, with professional players on the team, cited injuries on their lineup and preferred to stay away from the competition having automatically qualified to the Asian Clubs Championship as hosts of the finals which will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: the top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones and the host nation.

The top Asian teams will be Al Hikma, Al Orthodoxi, the champion teams of South Korean, Chinese Taipei, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the Gulf Champion.

The International Basketball Federation, FIBA, has approved for the champion club of Asia to participate in the McDonalds Championship which will be held in Italy later this year.

The McDonalds Championship, a high-level tourney, groups the world's

top teams including the NBA champion, two teams from Europe, one team from South America and the best team from Oceania. From now on, the Asian champion will take part in the annual event biennially.

Al Orthodoxi and Al Ahli both previously took part in the Asian Clubs Championship with Al Ahli securing the best Jordanian showing with a fourth place finish in 1995.

The West Asian Championship was initiated with the formation of Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) West Asia Zone last year and three championships have been held so far. The women's and the U-18 youth's tournaments and the 1st West Asian Championship in which five teams took part.

Al Riyadi of Lebanon won the title playing against Al Mina'. Al Wihdeh, Iran's Zobohan and Jordan's former champions Al Jazireh who were hosts.



Steffi Graf

Graf in Fed Cup team

BONN (R) — Former World No. 1 Steffi Graf will return to Germany's Fed Cup team after a three-year absence for their World Group Two first-round tie against Japan later this month, the German Tennis Federation (DTB) said on Wednesday.

The DTB picked Graf, Anke Huber, Andrea Glass and Marlene Weingaertner for the tie on April 24 and 25 in Hamburg.

Japan named Ai Sugiyama, Miho Saeki, Shinobu Asagoe and Saori Obata.

Graf, currently fifth in the WTA rankings, led Germany to Fed Cup victory in 1987 and 1992. She left the German team in 1996 after a financial row between her manager and the DTB.

Chang ousted in second round; Agassi withdraws due to injury

TOKYO (AP) — With big serves and deadly returns, unseeded Jens Knippschild of Germany upset ninth seed Michael Chang 6-3, 6-4 on Wednesday, advancing to the third round of the Japan Open.

Also making a second-round exit was Andre Agassi, winner of the rain-delayed Salem Open final in Hong Kong on Monday. He withdrew with a right shoulder injury from a semifinal match of that tournament, organisers said. Agassi arrived in Tokyo on Tuesday.

They said his injury was aggravated in a subsequent doubles match and then the singles final in which he beat Boris Becker of Germany 6-7 (4-7), 6-4, 6-4.

Agassi, who had a first-round bye along with seven other top seeds, was originally scheduled to play unseeded Bernd Karbacher of Germany on the Ariake Colosseum's Centre court

Wednesday afternoon.

Some other seeds were triumphant, including top seed Richard Krajicek, who had an easy win as his opponent, fellow

Netherlander John Van Lottum, retired with neck strain when Krajicek was leading 3-1 in the opening set.

Third-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden beat Radek Stepanek of the Czech Republic 7-6 (7-1), 6-4.

"It was a tough match, extremely, on this fast court, I

served well and he didn't have one break in the whole match," said Enqvist. "The weather today was good. Yesterday it was almost a hurricane."

In the day's biggest upset, Chang, who slipped to the rank of 60, 40 from No. 2 in 1996 on the ATP Tour, suffered from a slow start and had trouble getting back into rhythm in the first set.

In the second set,

Knippschild, ranked 101st, scored two breaks while yielding one, hitting hard and putting shots into the corners.

Even with only one ace, Knippschild won 69 per cent of his service points, compared to Chang's two aces and 63 per cent. The gap was even bigger in the second serve points, with Knippschild's averaging 67 per cent against the American's 43 per cent.

"I tried to put a lot of shots into the corners and down the lines," a jubilant Knippschild said. "He is one of the highest-ranked players I have defeated so far."

"I was in control except when I lost a little bit of concentration that cost me two double-faults and a break in the second set," said the 24-year-old from Arolsen, Germany. "and I was returning very well."

Knippschild won a total of 24 return points, compared to Chang's 14.

"I guess Chang is at the

moment trying to find his game back after his injuries," Knippschild said. "If he gets one or two good matches, I think he would easily get back to the top 20 or even top 10."

Chang said: "Today, Jens played well. He had some good forehands and was serving pretty well. I felt like I was not able to hit the kind of shots I wanted to hit. That's been frustrating and something that I am working at."

On his injury, Chang said it is not bothering him any more.

"I was moving a little bit slower with the knee injury, but that's in the past. I feel I'm moving better, though I don't know if I am moving as fast as did when I was the No. 2 in the world," said the 27-year-old from Mercer Island, Washington.

"Hopefully, it will be a great clay-court season. This first half has been tough. Maybe my results will be better on the clay, who knows? Freoch open has been always a good tournament for me."

Chang won the French open in 1989 and was runner-up there in 1995.

In women's action, defending champion and top seed Ai Sugiyama of Japan beat her first-round opponent, qualifier Wynne Prakusya of Indonesia, 6-1, 6-3.

"I'm glad I was able to play aggressively from the beginning today," said Sugiyama, recovering from leg injuries she suffered while practising in mid-March.

"In the second set at 4-1, I lost rhythm briefly but was able to come back quickly," said Sugiyama, at No. 27 the highest-ranked women's singles player competing. "Overall, I think I played well."

Among other seeds, No. 3 Corina Morariu beat her first-round opponent Marilou Maruska of Austria 6-3, 6-2, while fourth-seeded American Kimberly Po lost 7-5, 4-6, 6-3 to Sandra Kleinova of the Czech Republic in the second round.



German tennis player Jens Knippschild reacts after beating Michael Chang of USA during their match in the Japan Open. Unseeded Knippschild defeated ninth-seeded Chang 6-3, 6-4 (AFP photo)

Business elite recruited to make up Sydney cash shortfall

SYDNEY (AFP) — A group of top Australian business leaders was formed on Wednesday to help squeeze more sponsorship dollars from major corporations for next year's Sydney Olympics.

The Chief Executives' Olympic Forum (CEOFO) comprises seven business heavyweights, including McDonalds Corp. chief Charlie Bell, trucking magnate Lindsay Fox and Ansett Australia Ltd. boss Rod Eddington.

Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) chief executive Sandy Hollway will also sit on the board, which will hold its first meeting on May 31. The Games is facing a funding shortfall of some A\$218 million (\$137 million) and Olympic executives say they hope the business elite will "open doors" to more cash.

"The idea of the CEOFO is to help us develop contacts at very top levels in the business community, help us to raise the revenues we need and to talk up the Games in the business networks," Hollway told reporters here.

"On the revenue side ...

we're still stretching for it but I don't want to leave any stone unturned in our effort to achieve that revenue target and I think that some senior business figures can help us at this point." He said the \$218 million would be raised slowly and a decision would be taken in the next two months on whether a cut in SOCOG spending was needed. "It's a matter of scrounging and scraping for every million, two million, half million to meet the goods and services on our list," he said. Hollway said he also wanted to sound out up to 500 executives from senior and middle management and supervisory business positions to help run the Games.

"As you get closer to the Games it will necessarily become harder and harder to get good people to leave permanent jobs and come to a one-off project for a relative short time," he said.

Employers should see the secondments as beneficial to their employees as well as making a contribution to the Olympic effort, he said. On the series of scandals that have rocked the Olympic movement,

Hollway claimed most of them had been "put to bed".

"The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is quite clearly on a path of irreversible change and reform," he said. He said embattled Australian IOC official Phil Coles would

probably not have his latest corruption case considered for weeks now it had been referred to a new IOC ethics committee. "Expedition is important but proper process is very important too," he said. "The sooner every strand of this controversy is out of the way the better."

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Prince Hamzah attends fencing event

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah, the Regent, on Wednesday attended a fencing championship, which was held by the Jordan Fencing Federation at the Applied Science University as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament. The Iraqi team, which is participating in the event along with the national and Lebanese teams, won Wednesday's matches. Winners were awarded by Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mansar.

Jordan wins gold in taekwondo

AMMAN — Jordan's Mohammad Falah on Wednesday won the gold medal at the 11th Tehran International Taekwondo Championship for men after he defeated his Iranian counterpart 4-0. As part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games, the team is taking part in the Tehran event alongside teams from Korea, Taiwan, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Iran and other countries.

Municipality to support soccer team

AMMAN — The Jordan Football Association (JFA) has contacted its Iraqi counterpart to hold a two-week training camp for the national team in Baghdad. The Jordanian team will play three friendlies as part of preparations to retain the gold medal at the Pan-Arab Games. Meanwhile, the Greater Amman Municipality's board of directors has agreed in its recent meeting to provide the JFA with JD40,000 in order to support the national team.

Wrestling team leaves for Syria

AMMAN — The national wrestling team left to Syria on Wednesday to participate in the Damascus International Wrestling Championship, which is being organised by the Syrian federation with several Arab countries taking part. The Jordan Wrestling Federation, in its recent meeting, discussed the Jordanian preparations for the event and arrangements to host the Late King Abdullah I International Wrestling Championship next month. Invitations were sent to 14 Arab and foreign countries, as Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Cyprus, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine and Iran, which are well-known for their professional wrestling standards, welcomed participation. Also, as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament, the federation will hold a training camp in Iran next June.



Dutch tennis player Richard Krajicek returns the ball from compatriot John Van Lottum during the second round match in the Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo. Top-seeded Krajicek comfortably advanced to the third round when Van Lottum abandoned the match due to an injury (AFP photo)

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CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Steven Spielberg's ANIZ Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15 SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Show: 9:30	CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' Sophie Marceau ... in Leo Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA Leonardo Di Caprio ... in TITANIC Shows: 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45	CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 KISS THE GIRLS Shows: 3:30, 5:30	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Julia Roberts ... in STEPMOM Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 THE MAGIC SWORD Thursday and Friday mornings	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan ... in YOU'VE GOT M@T Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 RUSH HOUR Shows: 5:00 p.m. only	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 The political satire AL SALAM AL Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Back injury forces Sampras out of Barcelona Open

BARCELONA (R) — Pete Sampras was forced out of the Barcelona Open on Wednesday after aggravating a back injury, depriving the event of a three-way shoot-out for the world number one slot.

Sampras, who lost top spot last month but quickly recovered it, strained a muscle in his lower back while playing a low-key doubles match partnered by Britain's Tim Henman.

He had been due to open his singles campaign against fellow American Vince Spadea on Wednesday but will now travel back to the United States for immediate treatment.

Organisers later said Spadea will play Frenchman Rodolphe Gilbert, who gets his chance under the "lucky loser" rule. "It was my own fault," explained Sampras, who expects to be out for around 10 days. "Last night when I played the doubles it was very cold and I hadn't warmed up properly. I was very stiff last night

and this morning." Sampras, who suffered a similar problem at the Paris indoor event last year, will also miss next week's tournament in Monte Carlo and will not play a match on clay until Rome in May — a severe blow to his preparations for the French Open.

Sampras had been hoping to defend his No. 1 ranking against close challengers Carlos Moya and Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

The Russian later lost his second round match to Argentina's Franco Squillari but Moya was still in with a chance of overhauling the American by the end of the tournament.

Moya snatched top spot from Sampras last month but held it for just two weeks. Sampras leads Moya by 72 ranking points.

For Sampras, far more important than the ranking was the chance for some high-level practice on clay.

He said this week he was determined to mount his most serious challenge yet for the French Open, the one Grand Slam title which



Moroccan Youness El Aynaoui returns the ball during his Godo Open match against Spanish Alex Corretja in Barcelona. El Aynaoui defeated Corretja with 7-6, 7-3 and 6-3 (AFP photo)

Browbeaten Corretja to take a rest

BARCELONA (AP) — Spain's Albert Costa, coming off a tournament victory in the Estoril Open in Portugal, beat Italy's Andrea Gaudenzi 6-3, 6-2 on Tuesday in the Seat Godo Open.

"I was a little worried. I have had problems with Gaudenzi, but today it was a little easier," Costa said after the first-round match in the clay-court tournament.

Spain's Alex Corretja, No. 5 in the ATP Tour rankings,

failed to rebound from a poor performance in the Davis Cup, dropping a 7-6 (7-3), 6-3 decision to Morocco's Youness El Aynaoui.

"Mentally I don't have the same motivation as in other years," Corretja said. "Off the court I feel fine, but on the court I just don't have any motivation."

"I don't have any desire to play. I wanted to try playing in the Davis Cup and the Godo to see if that helped, but it hasn't."

Fulham dismiss Keegan 'super' contract

LONDON (AFP) — Fulham have dismissed suggestions that owner Mohamed Al Fayed is set to offer manager Kevin Keegan a new three-year contract now that he has taken the club into the First Division.

Keegan's current deal runs out in the summer of 2000 when he is tipped to take on the England coach's role full time.

But Al Fayed is not set to let down England supporters by offering Keegan new terms at Craven Cottage.

"It is just hearsay. Just speculation," a Fulham spokesman said.

"Kevin said that he had six games left for

this season and he reiterated his commitment to see out his contract with Fulham. That is the situation."

After earning promotion to the First Division on Tuesday night with victory over Gillingham, Fulham are confident they will succeed in achieving Keegan's five-year plan of reaching the Premiership ahead of schedule.

Keegan took over at Fulham in September 1997 and immediately promised to take the struggling club into the top flight for the first time since 1968 within five years.

"The Premiership is achievable for anyone in the First Division," the spokesman said.

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Jordan Rally gets sponsor until 2001

Top competitors head Friday's National Rally entries

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — Officials at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) Wednesday unveiled a three-year sponsorship agreement with the French firm Seita that will cover auto sports events in the Kingdom until the year 2001.

Seita which markets the cigarette brands of Gauloises and Gitanes will sponsor five rallies and eight carting events as well as the Rumman Hill Climb and other events on the RACJ calendar.

During a press conference, RACJ Director Hasan Ala'eddin said after three seasons without a main sponsor, "Gauloises was chosen because of their consistent effort in sponsoring carting and rallies as supporting Jordanian competitors in upcoming events."

Ala'eddin also noted that Gauloises was the main sponsor of the 17th Jordan International Rally — one of the most prestigious sports events on the Kingdom's sports calendar which this year will be held May 13-14.

He added that the rally season would commence April 16 with the Spring National Rally, considered as a serious practice for the first day of the Jordan Rally for the Kingdom's competitors. The next event will be the April 30 carting competition.

Friday's national rally will

include 81 kilometres of 11 special stages and will be run over 286 kilometres in areas close to the capital which have been assigned to draw more spectators.

Drivers will set out from RACJ and drive through Yajouz, Abu Nusair, Rumman, Slehi, Kassarat, Iraq Al Amir, the Dead Sea, Mushaggar, Mousa Springs, Siyagha, and Na'our.

Entrants include 1996 and 1998 Jordan Drivers Open champion Ahmad Daoud, his elder brother 1997 champion Mohammad Daoud, Bashar Bustami, Amjad Farrah, and Ma'rouf Abu Samra.

RACJ officials expressed pride in the late King Hussein's support to auto sports in the Kingdom, noting that they expected the same support from His Majesty King Abdullah, an avid fan and competitor and Jordanian Drivers Open Champion in 1986 and 1988.

Ala'eddin also underlined the support of HRH Prince Faisal, chairman of the Auto Sports Committee at RACJ.

During the press conference, Seita representative Basem Dajani announced that Gauloises will fully sponsor a team of six competitors in the Carting Championship as well as one driver, Mohammad Al Daoud and co-driver, Khaled Zakaria in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution, in the rallies.

The six-member carting team is

headed by Khaled Zakaria and includes Barkev Shadian, Zeid Nimri, Omar Khalil, Abeer Batikhi, and Ra'ed Karzon.

Dajani noted that Gauloises had sponsored some carting events during the past year but would sponsor all events in the 1999-2001 season.

He added that Gauloises, which entered the Jordanian market in 1998, was a main sponsor of auto sports worldwide, especially Formula 1 events.

The Jordan Rally will be the second leg of the Middle East Rally Championship after the inaugural UAE Rally won by Bin Sulayem.

Jordanian drivers were slated to take part in the UAE Rally, but pulled out observing the mourning period following the passing on Feb. 7 of RACJ Patron His Majesty King Hussein.

Ala'eddin expressed hope that Jordanian drivers would attain advanced standings in the Jordan Rally to improve their regional standings in the championship which includes rallies in Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, Cyprus and Dubai.

The Jordan International Rally will start Thursday from King Abdullah Gardens. Friday's finish ramp will be at Amman's Le Meridien, dubbed "home of the rally."

Last year's champion Mohammad Bin Sulayem of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), eight times winner of the Jordan Rally

title, will be competing, as well as last year's runner up Cypriot Andreas Tsouloftas and third place finisher Australia's Ron Cremen.

With co-driver Ronan Morgan, 10-time Middle East champion Bin Sulayem last year dominated the two-day 23-stage rally for the third consecutive year.

Jordan's top competitor was 1996 Jordan Drivers Open champion Ahmad Al Daoud and partner Malek Hariri who came in fourth overall as only fifteen out of 29 starters finished the rally including seven Jordanians.

Asphalt roads form the first day's stages while the second day's desert tracks prove to be the ultimate test of experience, stamina and well-maintained and sponsored teams.

No Jordanian has won the rally since it started in 1981.

The best Jordanian showing was third place finishes by Ziyad Bustami in 1981, King Abdullah in 1986 and 1988; Hani Bisharat in 1987, Amjad Farrah in 1993, and Ma'rouf Abu Samra in 1995.

Lesser known foreigners help Dallas upset Spurs

DALLAS (R) — This time it was the Dallas Mavericks' little-known big men — Australian Chris Anstey and German Dirk Nowitzki — and not the San Antonio Spurs' stars Tim Duncan and David Robinson, who won the battle.

Anstey and Nowitzki were the key figures in a 12-1 run late in the fourth quarter as the Mavericks stunned the Spurs 92-86 on Tuesday to end a nine-game losing streak in the series.

"Those guys worked hard all year and it paid off with an unexpected win, probably the best one of the year," Dallas coach Don Nelson said of Anstey and Nowitzki.

"This is huge for our confidence," Nowitzki said.

"Winning against a good team like San Antonio at this stage in the season, or any win against a team higher than U.S. in the standings, is a good win for U.S.," said Anstey.

It was the Mavs' first win of the season against a Western Conference team with a winning record.

Anstey scored all eight of his points in the fourth quarter and added three blocks. Nowitzki finished with 12 points and a career-high 13 rebounds.

"I come off the bench all the time. I just try to do my best," said Nowitzki, who got a rare start. "There were other ways to stay in the game, play some defence, get some rebounds, and that's what I try to do."

"The rebounding was the most important thing," Nelson said of Nowitzki. "He hasn't shot the ball like we know he can, but he moves it, he makes the extra pass to the open guy."

Michael Finley scored 25 points and Gary Trent 18 for Dallas.

Robinson had 22 points and 10 rebounds and Duncan 21 and 11 but both were invisible down the stretch. Robinson did not shoot in the fourth quarter, making just five free throws.

Duncan hit only 1-of-5 from the floor in the period.

"It was just a meltdown in the fourth quarter. We played awful," Robinson said.

In Portland, Isaiah Rider and Damon Stoudamire led seven players in double figures with 16 points each as the Trail Blazers never trailed in a convincing 113-86 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers, who had ousted them in the first round of the playoffs each of the past two seasons.

The Lakers have dropped

three of their last five games and are fifth in the Western Conference, one-half game behind Houston.

In Sacramento, veterans Karl Malone — back after a one-game league suspension — and John Stockton were too much for the youthful kings as the Utah Jazz pulled off a 105-100 victory in the third overtime meeting between the teams this season.

Malone had 30 points and 10 rebounds and hit the first two baskets in overtime off feeds from Stockton as Utah took control, running its season-high winning streak to eight games.

The Jazz remained tied with Portland for the league's best record at 29-8 and ended a four-game losing streak in overtime contests.

Utah was playing its third game in as many nights and fifth in six days.

In New York, Kurt Thomas scored a season-high 18 points as the Knicks outclassed the Philadelphia 76ers 91-72, solidifying their hold on seventh place.

The Knicks (20-17) have made the playoffs 11 straight seasons but entered the contest just one-half game ahead of the 76ers (19-18), who have not made the postseason since 1991.

New York held NBA scor-

ing leader Allen Iverson to only 11 points on 4-of-16 shooting. He committed seven turnovers.

In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp took advantage of Juwan Howard's absence to post season highs of 32 points and 17 rebounds, leading the Cavaliers to an 86-77 victory over the Washington Wizards.

Cleveland (19-18) moved into a tie with Philadelphia for the final Eastern playoff spot.

Howard, the Wizards' second-leading scorer and top rebounder, was placed on the injured list Monday with a sprained left ankle.

In Miami, Alonzo Mourning had 19 points and 10 rebounds and Tim Hardaway added 17 points as the Heat beat the Chicago Bulls 90-74, using their league-leading defence to hold an opponent below 75 points for the sixth time and under 80 for the 14th time this season.

Bulls coach Tim Floyd and guard Randy Brown were ejected for arguing in the decisive second quarter.

In Milwaukee, the Atlanta Hawks — already without injured starters Steve Smith and Laphonso Ellis and suspended reserve Anthony Johnson — lost forward Alan Henderson (bruised tailbone) in a 91-84 setback

to the Bucks that cost them fifth place in the Eastern Conference.

The Bucks (21-16) snapped a two-game skid and moved percentage points ahead of Atlanta (22-17) into fifth. The Hawks are just one-half game ahead of the Knicks.

In Los Angeles, Lamond Murray scored 22 points and hit a crucial late 3-pointer as the league-worst Clippers held on for a 109-101 victory over the New Jersey Nets, that gave them consecutive wins for the first time in well over a year.

Keith Van Horn scored 33 points and Stephen Marbury 23 for New Jersey.

SCOREBOARD			
NBA			
Cleveland	86	Washington	77
Miami	90	Chicago	74
New York	91	Philadelphia	72
Portland	113	LA Lakers	86
Dallas	92	San Antonio	86
Milwaukee	91	Atlanta	84
LA Clippers	109	New Jersey	101
Utah	105	Sacramento	100 (OT)
National League			
Milwaukee	8	Montreal	4
St Louis	4	Pittsburgh	2
Arizona	7	Los Angeles	6
Houston	7	San Francisco	3
American League			
Boston	6	White Sox	0
Tampa Bay	8	Toronto	5
NY Yankees	6	Baltimore	3
Oakland	3	Anaheim	2
Texas	15	Seattle	6

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Former defence minister slams Netanyahu in TV elections debate

HERZLIYA (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu talked security, economics, he talked — a lot — about the candidate who wouldn't debate him. But the issue that dominated the first debate in Israel's elections was Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In an encounter replete with bitter recriminations, Netanyahu faced off Tuesday evening against Yitzhak Mordechai — the defence minister he fired in January and the leader of a centrist party contending in May 17 elections.

Ehud Barak, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, refused to participate in the debate, saying the setting, a talk show on the Channel Two commercial television station, was inappropriate.

Netanyahu began by trying to make Barak's absence the central issue of the debate. "The strongest point of this debate is that this chair is empty," he said, accusing Barak of hiding the extent of the Labour Party's dovishness on land-for-peace negotiations with the Arabs.

"He does not want his leftist, real opinions exposed," Netanyahu said.

Mordechai, who holds a deeply personal grudge against Netanyahu, quickly shifted the discussion to his ex-boss.

Netanyahu fired Mordechai in January in a live news conference, accusing the popular ex-general of disloyalty to the Likud Party, just days after the two men and their wives shared an intimate dinner.

Mordechai launched the debate by saying Netanyahu's

leadership was marked by "a lack of integrity, of honesty, of decency." Netanyahu tried to keep the debate focused on his security policies, but Mordechai kept making it personal.

"You know your best friends don't believe you," he said, accusing Netanyahu of reneging on the Wye River land-for-security agreement with the Palestinians.

Mordechai said that was typical of Netanyahu's bad faith, and hinted that he had prevented Netanyahu from making decisions "that would have left Israel in a different situation than we are now."

He refused to elaborate. Mordechai laughed derisively when Netanyahu claimed credit for a reduction in terrorist attacks, and admonished at one point: "Don't lose your cool. I know what you're like."

Mordechai's strategy of derision — counselled by advisers who worked for Netanyahu in the 1996 campaign — appeared to wear down his opponent.

When Mordechai listed a litany of cabinet ministers who have abandoned Netanyahu, the prime minister countered "they're not my friends!" The talk show host, Nissim Mishal, pressed: "Do you have friends?" "I have friends!" a puffed Netanyahu replied.

"You're bankrupt," Mordechai chided. "You're a personal failure."

When Netanyahu swore he would never give up the entire Golan Heights to Syria, Mordechai said, "Look me in the eyes when you say that."

He laughed when Netanyahu repeated the statement, look-

ing him in the eyes.

He laughed again when Netanyahu produced a chart that purported to show improvements in Israel's economy. Mordechai and Barak both say Netanyahu is neglecting the unemployed.

Netanyahu accused Mordechai of "unfettered ambition." Afterwards, commentators said Mordechai had registered a surprise win over the media-savvy prime minister.

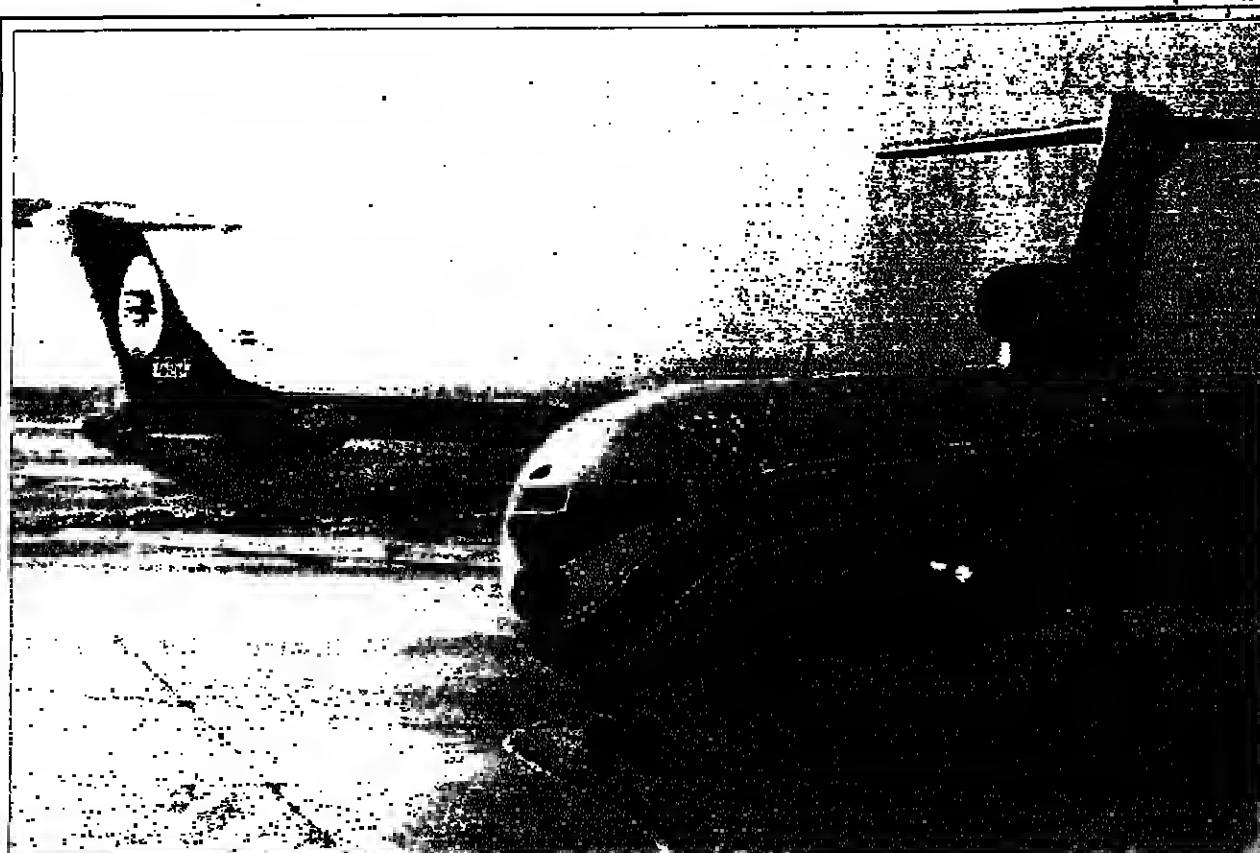
The debate "destroyed the myth that Netanyahu is unsailable on television, that he commands the medium totally," said Yaron Dekel, an analyst on Channel One television. Instead, he was "dragged into a personal argument."

A strong showing is crucial for Mordechai, who is not expected to survive the May 17 first-round vote. A June 1 runoff is scheduled between the two top vote-getters of the first vote if no one receives a majority. Polls forecast Netanyahu against Barak in the runoff.

Netanyahu adviser Danny Naveh said Mordechai dealt in "libels" instead of issues. "The issue," countered Mordechai Adviser Eyal Arad, "is Netanyahu's leadership."

An elated Mordechai slapped Arad's hand after the debate, shouting "bow'd I do!" On his way out, Netanyahu said "at least he had the guts to show up" — a final dig at Barak.

Barak has challenged Netanyahu to three debates during times allotted by the state-run television channel in the 30 days before elections — the traditional forum for televised debates in Israel.



LIBYAN PLANE LANDS IN AMMAN: A Libyan airliner lands on Wednesday in Jordan, ending a seven-year break in flights between the two countries brought on by U.N. sanctions over the 1988 Lockerbie airline bombing. Libyan Arab Airlines Flight 2821, carrying aviation and airline officials from Tripoli and Benghazi, landed at Amman's Queen Alia International Airport at 2:00 p.m. (Reuters photo)

Rights groups hold demo ahead of ruling on Arab Jerusalem residents

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Dozens of Palestinian and Israeli human rights activists demonstrated in Jerusalem on Wednesday against a mass expulsion of Palestinians from the Holy City by Israeli authorities.

The demonstrators, joined by Israeli prime ministerial challenger Azmi Bishara and prominent Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, were protesting eight days before a ruling on the matter by the Israeli high court.

"This policy has direct implications for the peace process. Israel cannot single-handedly empty Jerusalem of its Palestinian population,"

Ashrawi told journalists.

Six Israeli human rights groups have lodged a petition with the high court alleging that since 1996 the interior ministry has been applying retrospectively tougher criteria on Palestinians living in Jerusalem.

The court, which has thrown out a series of earlier appeals, is due to rule on the petition on April 22.

"In this case we're talking about people who were behaving according to the rules as they were understood before 1995-96 and yet have since had their ID cards revoked," said the lawyer for the petitioners, Eliahu Abrams.

"It goes against the natural

principles of justice," Abrams told AFP.

Abrams cited one case of a Palestinian family who lived in Saudi Arabia until 1991, returned home to Jerusalem but had their residency revoked when their 16-year-old son applied for his own identity card in 1996.

The rights groups charge that since the new rules were introduced in 1996, 2,083 Palestinian ID cards have been revoked, meaning that an estimated 8,332 individual family members have lost residency rights, a rise of 600 per cent.

"The Israeli public has no idea of what is happening. This is a way of harnessing domestic

and international public opinion," said Matt Brubacher of the rights group Bodedai.

Israel occupied the eastern part of Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 and, in a move which has never been recognised by the international community, claims the city as its eternal and undivided capital.

The city's nearly 200,000 Palestinian inhabitants, many of whom continue to hold Jordanian passports, also hold Israeli ID cards as permanent residents of Jerusalem.

A Palestinian whose ID card is revoked is automatically expelled from the city, even if his family has lived in Jerusalem for generations.

Tomatoes get rock 'n' roll treatment

LONDON (R) — British tomato growers have decided rock 'n' roll may be an ideal aphrodisiac for their plants. Growers who used to employ people or machines to shake the plants to increase pollination found they could get better results blasting them with loud bass-heavy music, the Guardian newspaper said. "Music with a strong beat is best," Alan Parker, chairman of the Tomato Grower's Association, was quoted as saying. Disc jockey Dave Cool asked to come up with tunes to pollinate by, included the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations" and Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark."

Warning over first sunrise in 2000

WELLINGTON (AFP) — People of a small island east of here, who will be the first to see the sun rise over the Millennium, have been warned to stay off the telephone or risk criminal charges. The warning followed a light plane crash near the Chatham Islands, 800 kilometres east of here. No one was killed, but a local resident called the media in New Zealand, leading to a crash of the telephone system. Chatham Islands Police Constable John Ireland said he was proud of community efforts following the crash, but disappointed by the person who rang the press in New Zealand. "To the person who did [this], should it happen again... I would be seriously considering charges," he wrote in this week's Chatham Islander newspaper.

Crime wave halts Russian elevators

MOSCOW (AP) — A minor crime wave has brought dozens of elevators in the Russian city of Volgograd to a grinding halt, forcing residents of high rise apartment buildings to take to the stairs. The Inter-Tass news agency reported on Wednesday that some 70 elevators in the southern Russian city had been immobilised after transformer connections were stolen from them during the past week. Electrical parts are often stolen for sale in Russia, but authorities said they could not rule out the possibility of a massive practical joke.

Dangerous snakes evicted from office

BRASILIA (R) — Fire-fighters were called in to evict a family of rattlesnakes that had slithered across the ceilings and walls of Brazil's justice ministry for two weeks, fraying the nerves of anxious civil servants. "You don't know what it's like to work in a place with snakes moving around over your head. They can fall down any time through holes" in the ceiling, one secretary complained. An electrician working on the fourth floor noticed a large rattlesnake and five offspring two weeks ago, speculating that the venomous creatures entered the building through air-conditioning vents. But a spokeswoman at the ministry said the fire-fighters were not summoned to remove the snakes until Tuesday, when a newspaper ran a story about the unwelcome guests.

Man walks down NYC skyscraper — on his hands

NEW YORK (R) — A salesman won hands-down, literally, in his attempt on Tuesday to set a Guinness world record. Mark Kenny, 34, walked on his hands down 1,200 steps of Manhattan's Citicorp building, besting the previous mark for the same distance in the Guinness Book of World Records by over four minutes. "My ears are popping," Kenny said on the 60th floor before setting out to make his mark, which he achieved in 51 minutes and 22 seconds. At the halfway point, he said he told himself "all right I've done halfway, I can do it again." Kenny trained for the feat by practising on his cellar stairs, as well as by sneaking into skyscraper's fire stairwells.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli-Palestinian fee dispute ends

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel and the Palestinian National Authority have resolved a fee dispute that halted trade via the largest Gaza commercial crossing point to Israel for nine days, officials said on Wednesday. Palestinians stopped sending their trucks through the Karni crossing on April 5 after they said Israel tripled fees imposed on each truck. Israel denied the allegation. Shlomo Drot, a spokesman for Israeli military authorities in the West Bank and Gaza, said the two sides had reached a compromise. Palestinian officials said trade had returned to normal and that the deal included a 30 per cent reduction in fees.

'Israel's Gulf War reparations approved'

TEL AVIV (R) — A U.N. committee handling 1991 Gulf War reparations claims against Iraq has approved more than \$31 million in compensation for Scud missile attacks against Israel, the Israeli justice ministry said on Wednesday. The ministry said the Geneva-based commission had authorised a total of \$31.5 million in compensation for 68 Israeli companies and \$260,831 to be divided between 13 individuals. "They are only decisions in principle about entitlement to compensation. The amounts of money decided upon [for each claimant] will be transferred at a later date," the statement said.

Iran carries out test of missile

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian armed forces have carried out a successful test of a surface-to-air missile, the first in a new line of air defence weapons, state radio and television said on Wednesday. State television showed pictures of the test launch but did not specify the range of the new missile, which officials said was designed and built entirely in Iran. An Iranian defence ministry spokesman was quoted as saying that the missile had been tested "successfully and hit its target at an appropriate altitude." The spokesman said the missile had been named Sayad-1 after Brigadier General Ali Sayad Shirazi, who was assassinated outside his home here on Saturday in an attack claimed by the rebel People's Mujahadeen.

Sudan sentences 10 to crucifixion

KHARTOUM (R) — A Sudanese tribunal has sentenced 10 people to death by crucifixion for involvement in tribal clashes in western Sudan in which more than 100 people were killed, a newspaper said on Wednesday. Judge Al Amin Al Tayeb found the defendants guilty of initiating the clashes in the state of west Darfur in February, the daily Akhbar Al Yaum said. The sentences have yet to be approved by the supreme court. The killing of three Arab nomad chiefs sparked the disturbances in and around the state capital of Geneina, close to the border with Chad. Some 131 people were killed and 85 wounded in the clashes.

Iranian stoned to death for murder

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian man was stoned to death in northern Iran for killing his three sons who he thought would hinder his plans to marry his mistress, a newspaper reported on Wednesday. The sentence was carried out in public in Babol, a town bordering the Caspian Sea, on Tuesday, Quds daily said. Ahmad Asgarpour had killed his sons, aged between seven and 12, because he thought they would stand in the way of his plans to divorce his wife and marry his mistress. He received 60 lashes before his execution, which began when the judge who sentenced him to death threw the first stone. "The people who threw most stones were the murderer's wife and her brother, who threw them at his head in fury," Quds said. Iran's Islamic law allows relatives of murdered victims to take part in the execution of the killer.

Vatican warns over plan to build mosque near Nazareth church

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Vatican warned Israel Wednesday against allowing the construction of a mosque next to the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, the main Christian holy site inside Israel.

The Vatican envoy in the Holy Land, Monsignor Pietro Sambi, said he told Israeli officials here Wednesday that construction of the Nazareth mosque would "disturb" church plans to mark the 2000th anniversary of Jesus' birth.

"I expressed the opposition of all Christians to this mosque, which if built could disturb festivities planned for the year 2000," Sambi told AFP following a meeting with officials

from Israel's ministry of religious affairs.

Sambi reiterated a threat made by the heads of all the Christian denominations in the Holy Land earlier this month to close churches across Israel if the government permits construction of the mosque.

Churches in Nazareth, Israel's biggest Arab city where according to the scriptures Jesus spent his youth, closed for two days earlier this month to protest the mosque project and a rash of attacks on the local Christians by Muslim radicals.

Sambi said that all Christian denominations had agreed that if Israeli authorities allows the mosque to be built, "we would resume and expand that action."

But he rejected suggestions

the dispute could hinder tentative plans by John Paul II to make his first visit to the Holy Land for the Millennium.

"We are not opposed to the construction of a mosque in Nazareth, but not next to the basilica because this would disturb Christian pilgrims," he said.

The conflict centres on demands by local Muslims to build a large mosque on a plot of land adjacent to the Basilica of the Annunciation, where the scriptures say the Archangel Gabriel told Mary she was pregnant with Jesus.

Ramez Jerassi, Nazareth's Christian mayor, plans to build a plaza on the plot to improve access to the basilica for millions of pilgrims expected to

visit the Holy Land for the Millennium.

But Muslims have set up a big tent and occupied the site, which is next to the grave of a local venerated Islamic cleric.

The row worsened after Muslim groups gained control of the city council in elections last November and pressed claims that the disputed plot had in the past belonged to the Islamic waqf, or trust, a position denied by municipal officials.

The dispute erupted into communal violence this month which involved attacks by Muslim radicals on Christians and their property.

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Katzav, who is in charge of affairs regarding Israel's million-strong Arab minority,

angered Christians by proposing the Muslims be allowed to build a small mosque on the site but after the millennium celebrations.

"This has been strongly opposed by the Religious Affairs Ministry, which is controlled by an ultra-Orthodox Jewish political party."

Critics say Katzav, who is also a campaign manager for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party, wanted to give in to Muslim demands as part of an effort to draw Arab support in May national elections.

The dispute is likely to come up during a planned April 26 meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Pope John Paul at the Vatican.

Many analysts see Milosevic winning so far

By Paul Taylor
Reuters

LONDON — As the Kosovo war enters its fourth week, many non-government analysts see Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic winning so far.

"So far, we are failing to win. We are not attaining our objectives. If our aim was to get Milosevic to withdraw his forces and stop harassing the Kosovars, the converse has happened," said William Hopkinson, senior defence analyst at Britain's Royal Institute of International Affairs.

NATO leaders' hopes of a short air war, in which Milosevic would buckle after a few cruise missiles, have evaporated. After three weeks of bombing, the allies have not eliminated air defences or prevented Serbian forces from expelling hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians from their homes and country.

Nor have they yet begun serious preparation for a ground offensive which most former generals and strategic analysts say will be necessary, but which Western leaders continue to insist is not planned.

"At this stage, Milosevic still holds the strategic high ground because for the West inflicting damage is not a strategic objective, whereas the Serbs are achieving their strategic objective of changing the demo-

graphic balance in Kosovo," said Zeev Schiff, Israel's veteran leading strategic analyst.

In a telephone interview, he called the conduct of the war so far a "half-pregnancy" and said it was clear from the outset that an air campaign would not be enough to prevail.

"It was miscalculated carefully and it's clear that they have to rethink everything from the beginning — the sooner the better," Schiff said.

He also expressed astonishment that NATO's sophisticated, high-tech bombers should have been so hampered by cloud cover.

"The war's a disaster so far," said Dana Allin, a Balkans expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

"NATO claims to have inflicted real damage but they haven't turned anything around. Meanwhile, Milosevic is winning the demographic war on the ground, driving ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo."

Allin said NATO's biggest problem was Western governments' "inexplicable and inexcusable failure to imagine that Milosevic would resort to ethnic cleansing on this scale."

Germany has said it has evidence that Belgrade had long planned an offensive to expel ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province under the code name Operation Horseshoe and had been implementing it before NATO air strikes began on March 24.

The flood of refugees, and their accounts of rape and murder, has cemented Western public support behind the war and made it politically hard for NATO governments to settle for anything less than a clear victory over Milosevic.

The political stakes are now so high that any compromise such as a partition of Kosovo would be denounced as a sell-out.

Yet Western leaders still rule out arming the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas and oppose independence for Kosovo on the grounds that it would destabilise nearby states.

The refugee influx has already unsettled Kosovo's neighbours, Macedonia and Albania, as well as the small Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro, extending the creeping instability that NATO aimed to halt, and placing conflicting demands on military resources.

Military sources say one reason it is taking so long to get U.S. Apache ground-attack helicopters into operation in Albania is that its sole major airport is choked with relief flights.

NATO's supreme military commander has said the alliance cannot drop food to tens of thousands of displaced civilians trapped in combat zones inside Kosovo because lumbering transport planes would be shot down.

"The magnitude of the

requirement is frankly staggering and there does not appear to be an easy solution at this time," U.S. General Wesley Clark told reporters on Tuesday.

According to NATO estimates, about 260,000 ethnic Albanians are surviving in the hills and forests of Kosovo or partly burned-out homes and farms.

The gloom of many strategic analysts contrasts starkly with the upbeat assessments offered by NATO's leaders. Clark has been proclaiming all week that "Milosevic is losing and he knows it."

But the NATO commander acknowledges he is fighting with one hand tied behind his back because of strict rules of engagement to avoid civilian casualties, and a mandate to conduct air operations without a ground campaign.

"We're doing everything we can to follow the minimum use of force," Clark said.

Several analysts said Clark's request for a further 300 U.S. aircraft, in addition to the 800 warplanes NATO has on the job, was a tacit admission that NATO had started with too few forces and had misjudged the punch it would need to budge Milosevic.

Others argued from the outset that there was no historical precedent for an air campaign alone achieving victory.

Retired French General Philippe Morillon, a veteran of flawed U.N. peacekeeping

operations in Bosnia, suggested early on that NATO could fail unless it was prepared to incur casualties in a ground war.

"The American theory of 'zero deaths' is the best way to end up totally ineffective. Who are these soldiers who are ready to kill and not ready to die?" he said.

The same criticism is heard in neutral Austria, where several commentators are saying it is absurd for NATO to have an overwhelming military machine which it is too timid to use because of fear of what public opinion will accept.

"What, please, are soldiers for?" asked Forum magazine Editor-in-Chief Christian Ortner in an editorial.

However, some strategic thinkers say Milosevic may have overplayed his hand and provoked NATO into the all-out war for which it initially had no stomach.

Jonathan Eyal of Britain's Royal United Services Institute said the Serbian leader had failed to break the NATO consensus or use Russia to force a settlement on his terms.

"He has actually solidified Western opposition to him in a way we had not managed to obtain in a decade. He is losing the war," Eyal said.

"The biggest imponderable is whether Yugoslavia will implode and collapse. A void in the middle of the Balkans is just as dangerous for us as a Serbia that throws its weight about."

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